FEAR AND LOATHING IN LAS VEGAS

-- 3RD DRAFT --

SCREENPLAY BY ALEX COX & TOD DAVIES

BASED ON THE BOOK BY HUNTER S. THOMPSON

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BLACK SCREEN

Roll Credits.

Title: "HE WHO MAKES A BEAST OF HIMSELF GETS RID OF THE PAIN OF BEING A MAN."

-- DR. JOHNSON

The VOICE OF RAOUL DUKE is heard.

DUKE VOICEOVER
We were somewhere around Barstow on the edge of the desert when the drugs began to take hold.

WHOOSH. The BLACK SCREEN gets wiped away by the WHITE DESERT and the RED CHEVY CONVERTIBLE that races down the highway at a hundred miles an hour....

Leaving behind it nothing but the DESERT.

ON THE ROAD TO LAS VEGAS EXT DAY

Following the RED CONVERTIBLE.
The convertible, top down, plows forward manically like a RED SHARK slicing through bloody water.

AT THE WHEEL

RAOUL DUKE, a.k.a. HUNTER S. THOMPSON, skeletal, bald, sunglassed, beer in hand.

Beside him, turning the music up, up, UP, DR. GONZO (real name withheld)--swarthy, stocky, firebreathing bull. He wears ONE BLACK GLOVE.

DUKE V/O
I remember saying something like: "I feel a bit lightheaded. Maybe you should drive..."

But in the car, nothing is said. DUKE stares straight ahead.

Oblivious to the bloody NICKS this procedure has left behind.

DUKE V/O
Suddenly there was a terrible roar all around us and the sky was full of what looked like huge bats, all swooping and screeching and diving around the car. And my voice screaming: "Holy Jesus! What are these goddamn animals?"

DUKE continues to look steadily ahead. DR. GONZO looks lazily at him.

DR. GONZO
Did you say something?

DUKE shakes his head, pulls over with a screech to the side of the road.

DUKE V/O
No point mentioning those bats, I thought. The poor bastard will see them soon enough.

He gets out of the car, goes to the trunk, OPENS it.

IN THE TRUNK -- a heavy drug and drink inventory. Like a mobile police narcotics lab.

DUKE surveys the cache.

DUKE V/O
We had two bags of grass, seventy-five pellets of mescaline, five sheets of high powered blotter acid, a salt shaker half full of cocaine, a whole galaxy of multi-colored uppers, downers, screamers, laughers....Also a quart of tequila, a quart of rum, a case of Budweiser, a pint of raw ether and two dozen amyls.

He scrambles a new selection into a kit bag, grabs another six-pack of beer, and slams the trunk shut.

DUKE V/O
Not that we <u>needed</u> all that for the trip, but once you get locked into a serious drug collection, the tendency is to push it as far as you can.

DUKE gets into the car and takes off down the road.

AS THE RED SHARK DISAPPEARS INTO THE DISTANCE --

DUKE V/O
The only thing that really worried me was the ether. There is nothing in the world more helpless and irresponsible and depraved than a man in the depths of an ether binge. And I knew we'd get into that rotten stuff pretty soon. Probably at the next gas station.

IN THE RED SHARK

DUKE continues his straightahead drive.
The RADIO NEWS wars with MUSIC from a TAPE RECORDER in the front seat.

RADIO NEWS
A House Subcommittee report says illegal drugs killed 160 American GI's last year--

40 of them in Vietnam...Drugs were suspected, it said, in another 56 military deaths in Asia..."Drug suppression in Vietnam is almost completely ineffective," the report said. "partially because some presently unknown corrupt officials in public office are involved..."

DR. GONZO turns the MUSIC up, drowning out the news.
He washes a couple of pills back with a new beer.

DR. GONZO
Man, this is the way to travel.

DUKE
Wait till you see those goddamn bats.

UP AHEAD - AT THE SIDE OF THE DESERTED ROAD

A LONE HITCHHIKER spots them, jumps up and down to get their attention.

DR. GONZO
Let's give this boy a lift.

DUKE
We can't stop here! This is <u>bat country</u>!

DR. GONZO grabs the steering wheel. The car swerves to the shoulder.

DR. GONZO
As your attorney, I advise you to act normal.

THE RED SHARK SCREECHES TO A GRAVEL SPEWING HALT. The HITCHHIKER, delighted by his luck, races to the car. A poor Okie kid with a big grin.

HITCHHIKER
Hot damn! I never rode in a convertible before!

And he STOPS DEAD. DUKE and DR. GONZO look out at him with HYPER NORMAL FIXED SMILES.

DUKE
Is that right? Well, I guess you're about ready, eh?

Somewhat reassured, the HITCHHIKER scrambles into the back seat DR. GONZO turns with a strange expression.

DR. GONZO
We're your friends. We're not like the others.

DUKE
(sharply)
No more of that talk, or I'll put the leeches on you.

DR. GONZO
Did you know that this same lonely desert was the last known home of the Manson family?

The HITCHHIKER considers getting out. Too late. The RED SHARK roars off down the road.

DOWN THE ROAD

The HITCHHIKER sweats bullets. DR. GONZO sings along to the tape player DUKE, also sweating bullets, keeps staring at the HITCHHIKER in the rearview mirror.

The HITCHHIKER meets his gaze with a weak smile.

DR. GONZO
(reassuringly)
It's okay. He's admiring the shape of your skull.

DUKE
(roaring over the road noise)
THERE'S ONE THING YOU SHOULD PROBABLY UNDERSTAND --

The HITCHHIKER stares at him, not blinking, gritting his teeth.

DUKE
(yells)
CAN YOU HEAR ME?

The HITCHHIKER nods.

DUKE keeps turning around to talk. Dangerous at that speed.

DUKE
That's good. Because I want you to know that we're on our way to Las Vegas to find the American Dream. That's why we rented this car. Can you grasp that?
(HITCHHIKER nods again)
I want you to have all the background.
(to DR. GONZO)
Here, you drive.

Still babbling intently at the mesmerized HITCHHIKER, DUKE trades his foot for DR. GONZO's on the accelerator, and climbs over him. DR. GONZO slides into the driver's seat. DUKE can now focus on the HITCHHIKER.

DUKE
This is a very ominous assignment-- with overtones of extreme personal danger.

The HITCHHIKER stares at him, terrified.

DUKE
Now, I don't want you to be afraid. I'm a Doctor of Journalism, goddamnit!
(WHACKS the BACK OF THE DRIVER'S SEAT with his fist)
This is <u>important</u>, goddamnit! This is a <u>true</u> story!

The CAR swerves sickeningly, then straightens out.

DR. GONZO
(screams)
Keep your hands off my fucking neck!

The HITCHHIKER looks as if he's decided to take his chances jumping. But DUKE grabs him and drags him back down.

DUKE
I want you to understand that this man at the wheel is my attorney! He's not just some dingbat I found on the Strip. Shit, look at him! He doesn't look like you or me, right? That's because he's a foreigner. I think he's probably Samoan. But it doesn't matter, does it? Are you prejudiced?

HITCHHIKER
Hell, no!

DUKE
I didn't think so. Because in spite of his race, this man is extremely valuable to me --

He waves his hand, meaning to slap DR. GONZO on the thigh, but hits a SIX PACK instead.

DUKE
Hell, I forgot all about this beer. You want one?
(HITCHHIKER shakes his head)
How about some ether?

HITCHHIKER
What?

DUKE
Never mind. Let's get right to the heart of this thing. You see, about twenty-four hours ago we were sitting in the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel --

THE BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL, 1971 EXT DAY

A calm, beautiful, pastel Los Angeles day. PALM TREES wave dreamily.

DUKE V/O
-- in the patio section, of course. Under a palm tree.

THE BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL POLO LOUNGE INT DAY

A uniformed DWARF, carrying a PHONE ON A TRAY, makes his way through the glitteringly well-heeled POLO LOUNGE CROWD. ACTRESSES with long straight hair and hot pants. Affluent ROCK PROMOTERS with long fluffy hair and beads.

A PIANIST plays a mild version of "PUFF, THE MAGIC DRAGON."

DUKE V/O
...hiding from the brutish realities of this foul year of Our Lord, 1971.

ON THE PATIO can be seen DUKE and DR. GONZO, the latter clad in white rayon bell bottoms and a khaki undershirt, the former in a frayed Acapulco shirt, levis, dirty white sneakers, and shades. The table is littered with glasses and overflowing ashtrays.

Both of them are so drunk, they can hardly speak.

A uniformed DWARF approaches, bearing a pink TELEPHONE on a silver tray

DWARF
This must be the call you've been waiting for all this time, sir.

DUKE takes the PHONE, listens. He hangs up. Turns to face DR. GONZO.

DUKE
That was headquarters. They want me to go to Las Vegas at once and make contact with a Portuguese photographer named Lacerda. He'll have the details.

DR. GONZO
What kind of story is this?

DUKE
The Mint 400. It's the richest off-the-road race for motorcycles in the history of organized sport--a fantastic spectacle in honor of some fatback grossero named Del Webb who owns (CONT.)

DUKE (CONT.)
the luxurious Mint Hotel in the heart of downtown Las Vegas. All I have to do is check into my soundproof suite...

DR. GONZO
Suite?

DUKE nods.

DR. GONZO
God hell! I think I see the pattern!

DR. GONZO stands up, turns around twice in his excitement, tucks his undershirt into his pants, and POUNDS the table so hard that glasses fly everywhere.

DR. GONZO
This one sounds like real trouble! You're going to need plenty of legal advice before this thing is over. And my first advice is that you should rent a very fast car wtih no top and get the hell out of L.A. for at least forty-eight hours.

DUKE rises. They head for the lobby.

DR. GONZO
This blows my weekend, because naturally I'll have to go with you--and we'll have to arm ourselves.

DUKE
(nods thoughtfully)
Why not? If a thing like this is worth doing at all, it's worth doing right. This is the American Dream in action! We'd be fools not to ride this strange torpedo all the way out to the end.

DR. GONZO
Indeed. We must do it.

They march out.

THE BEVERLY HILLS HOTEL EXT DAY

DUKE and DR. GONZO hurry out the door.

DUKE
The first thing we need is drugs, and a super-sensitive tape recorder. And some Acapulco shirts.

DR. GONZO
As your attorney I advise you to buy motorcycle. How else can you cover a thing like this righteously?

DUKE
We gotta get hold of a Vincent Black Shadow.

DR. GONZO
What's that?

DUKE
Fantastic bike. Two thousand cubic inches, 200 brake-horsepower at 4,000 r.p.m. on a magnesium frame, with styrofoam seats and a total curb weight of 200 lbs.

The CAR VALET drives up DUKE's old PINTO - brown paint job, rusted-out, smashed door panels. The exact opposite of the VINCENT BLACK SHADOW.

DR. GONZO
You better call New York for some cash.

They get in and take off, muffler dragging on the ground.

POLYNESIAN BAR EXT DAY

The PINTO parked haphazardly outside, a BUNCH OF BRIGHTLY COLORED SHIRTS hanging in the rear window. An ORGY OF CONSUMPTION has been unleashed.

DUKE V/O
Getting hold of the drugs and shirts had been no problem, but the car and tape recorder were not easy things to round up at 6:30 on a Friday afternoon in Hollywood.

POLYNESIAN BAR INT DAY

DR. GONZO yells into a PAYPHONE in a darkly lit corner.

DUKE carries over four Singapore Slings. He tosses the ornamental parasols into the pot of a plastic rubber plant. They join many other parasols there.

DR. GONZO
(hand over the PHONE)
Seventeen calls, but I finally located a car with adequate horsepower and the proper coloring.
(into PHONE)
Hang onto it. We'll be there in thirty minutes.
(shouts)
What? OF COURSE the gentleman has a major credit card! Do you realize who the fuck you're talking to?

DUKE
(hands him a drink)
Don't take any guff from these swine.
(GONZO slams the PHONE down)
Now we need a sound store with the finest equipment. Nothing dinky. One of those new Belgian Heliowatts with a voice-activated shotgun mike, for picking up conversations in oncoming cars.

GONZO nods curtly and goes back to working the phone.

POLYNESIAN BAR EXT DAY

DUKE and DR. GONZO emerge from the bar, carrying drinks. They drive away.

DUKE V/O
We made several more calls and finally located our equipment in a store about five miles away. It was closed, but the salesman said he would wait, if we hurried...

SUNSET BOULEVARD EXT DAY

TRAFFIC JAM. The PINTO caught in it. DUKE honks the horn as an AMBULANCE lumbers past.

DUKE V/O
But we were delayed en route when a Stingray in front of us killed a pedestrian.

DUKE leans on the horn.

SOUND STORE EXT DUSK

A "CLOSED" sign up. DUKE pounds on the door. DR. GONZO's face is pressed to the window glass.

DUKE V/O
The store was closed by the time we got there. There were people inside, but they refused to come to the double-glass door until we gave it a few belts and made ourselves clear.

Things turn ugly. TWO SALESMEN holding TIRE IRONS come to the door. A negotiation goes on through the mail slot.

DUKE V/O
Finally, we managed to negotiate a sale.

The SALESMEN open the door just wide enough to shove the SOUND EQUIPMENT out, and write down the credit card number as DUKE holds the card against the glass.

SALESMAN
(through the slot)
Now take that stuff and get the hell away from here!

DR. GONZO
(shaking his fist)
We'll be back. One of these days I'll toss a fucking bomb into this place! I have your name on this sales slip! I'll find out where you live and burn your house down!
(mutters)
That'll give him something to think about.

DUKE tosses the equipment in the PINTO, and they drive away.

DUKE V/O
We had trouble, again, at the car rental agency.

CAR RENTAL AGENCY EXT NIGHT

DUKE sits at the wheel of the RED SHARK, beer in hand, signing the rental papers for a nervous AGENT.

DUKE backs the car FULL SPEED to the gas pump. The AGENT runs after him.

AGENT
Good god! You just backed over that two foot concrete abutment and you didn't even slow down! Forty-five in reverse! And you barely missed the pump!

DUKE
No harm done. I always test the transmission that way. The rear end. For stress factors.

DR. GONZO finishes unloading the PINTO. He carries the last box of rum and ice and gets into the car with it.

AGENT
Say. Are you fellows drinking?

DUKE
Never mind. We're responsible people.

He JAMS the car into LOW GEAR and lurches into traffic. The AGENT runs into the street and helplessly watches them go

In the car, DR. GONZO lights up a huge HASH PIPE.

DR. GONZO
There's another worrier. He's probably all cranked up on speed.

DUKE
You're right. And for christ's sake, don't smoke that pipe at stoplights. Keep in mind we're exposed.

DR. GONZO
(nods)
We need a big hookah. Keep it down here, out of sight. Anybody sees us, they'll think we're using oxygen.

RUNDOWN BEACH HOUSE EXT NIGHT

DUKE and GONZO ferry drugs into the RED SHARK.

DUKE V/O
We spent the rest of that night rounding up materials and packing the car.

They disappear. The RED SHARK glitters in the moonlight. In the distance, the SOUND of someone SHOUTING as they JUMP INTO THE SURF.

DUKE V/O
Then we ate some mescaline and went swimming in the ocean. Somewhere around dawn we had breakfast in a Malibu coffee shop --

PASADENA FREEWAY EXT DAY

The RED SHARK drives east.

DUKE V/O
-- then drove very carefully across town and plunged onto the smog-shrouded Pasadena Freeway, heading East.

DESERT ROAD EXT DAY

The HITCHHIKER stares, glassy-eyed, at DUKE.

DUKE
Do you understand?
(HITCHHIKER nods)
I know what you're thinking. You're thinking: "Old elephants limp off to the hills to die: old Americans go out to the highway and drive themselves to death with huge cars."

HITCHHIKER
No, no --

DUKE
(earnestly)
But our trip is different. It is a classic affirmation of everything right
(CONT.)

DUKE (CONT.)
and true in the national character. It is a gross, physical salute to the fantastic possiblities of life in this country. But only for those with true grit. And we're chock full of that.

DR. GONZO
Damn straight.

DUKE
My attorney understands this, despite his racial handicap. But you --

The CAR veers off the road and screeches to a halt. DR. GONZO clutches his heart.

DR. GONZO
My heart! Where's the medicine?

DUKE reaches in the kit bag, pulls out FOUR AMYL CAPSULES. Each man breaks two under his nose.

DR. GONZO
Turn up the fucking music!
My heart feels like an alligator!
Volume! Clarity! Bass!

He flails his arms. DUKE turns up the radio and tape machine full bore, cackling wildly.

DUKE
What the fuck are we doing out here in the desert when we both have bad hearts?

Both COLLAPSE LAUGHING. The HITCHHIKER starts scrambling out, over the trunk lid. DR. GONZO hunches around to face him. The HITCHHIKER freezes.

DR. GONZO
The truth is, we're going to Vegas to croak a scag baron named Savage Henry. I've known him for years, but he ripped us off--you know what that means, right?

The HITCHHIKER is speechless. DR. GONZO snarls.

DR. GONZO
Savage Henry has cashed in his check! We're going to rip his lungs out!

DUKE
And eat them! The bastard won't get away with this! What's going on in this country when a... sandbagging... scumsucker... doctors of journalism...

Blood rushes to DUKE's head. DR. GONZO cracks another amyl under his nose. The HITCHIKER's feet hit the asphalt and he starts running back towards Baker.

HITCHHIKER
Thanks for the ride! Thanks a lot! I like you guys! Don't worry about me!

DUKE
(yells)
Wait a minute! Come back and have a beer!

DUKE leans back against the seat, breathing hard.

DUKE
I'm worried about that boy.

DR. GONZO
Good riddance. We had a real freak on our hands. Did you see his eyes?

DUKE opens the door and reels around to the driver's side. DR GONZO opens a fresh bottle of tequila.

DUKE
Move over. We have to get out of California before that kid finds a cop.

DR. GONZO
Let's turn around and drive back to the Polo Lounge. They'll never look for us there.

DUKE stomps on the accelerator.

DUKE
It's absolutely imperative that we get to the Mint Hotel before the deadline for press registration. Otherwise we might have to pay for our suite.

GONZO hands a WHITE BLOTTER to DUKE.

As the RED SHARK disappears into the desert --

DR. GONZO'S VOICE
Your half of the acid. Chew it up like baseball gum. We have thirty minutes before we turn into wild animals. As your attorney, I advise you to drive at top speed.

The SHARK vanishes into a heat haze. Leaving nothing but the desert and the distant figure of the HITCHHIKER, still running, behind.

BLACK SCREEN

DUKE'S VOICE
Pay no attention to this swine. Actually, we're both Doctors of Journalism, and we're here in Las Vegas to cover the main story of our generation.

LAS VEGAS MINT HOTEL EXT DAY

DUKE, sweating profusely, holding his beer, hands over the RED SHARK to a PARKING ATTENDANT.

DR GONZO, behind him, paws frantically through the luggage on the sidewalk, looking for his .357 MAGNUM.

DR. GONZO
Let's forget this bullshit about the American Dream. The important thing's the Great Samoan Dream.

DUKE stares fixedly at the TICKET the ATTENDANT gives him.

DUKE
I need this, right?

ATTENDANT
It's okay. I'll remember your face.

DR GONZO finds the MAGNUM, sags with relief, pockets it. The TWO MEN march toward the HOTEL LOBBY.

DUKE
Get the story. Never lose sight of the primary responsibility.

DR. GONZO
What is the story?

DUKE looks at him blankly as they ENTER THE HOTEL.

DUKE V/O
Nobody had bothered to say. We would have to drum it up on our own. Horatio Alger on drugs. Pure Gonzo journalism.

MINT HOTEL LOBBY INT DAY

DUKE and GONZO walk to the registration line, past an array of CONSUMER GOODS - including several mannequins, one of which is dressed in a blue blazer, captain's hat with gold braid, tan pants and silk scarf.

DR. GONZO
(manically)
First thing -- immediately -- room service. We need four club sandwiches, four shrimp cocktails, a quart of rum, nine grapefruit. Vitamin C. WE'LL NEED ALL WE CAN GET.

EVERYONE IN LINE TURNS AND STARES AT THEM.

DUKE
Let me handle this.
(mutters to himself as they push to the front of the line)
Be quiet, be calm...name, rank, and press affiliation, nothing else... ignore this terrible drug, pretend it's not happening...

And he comes face to face with the STONY-FACED WOMAN RESERVATIONS CLERK. As he stares at her, babbling, her FACE BEGINS TO MORPH. Shimmers around the edges. Goes rubbery.

DUKE
Hi there. My name...ah, Raoul Duke... on ..on <u>that</u> list, that's for sure. Free lunch, final wisdom, total coverage...why not? I have my attorney with me, and I realize of course that <u>his</u> name is not on the list, but we <u>must</u> have that suite. Yes. Just check the list and (CONT.)

DUKE (CONT.)
you'll see. Don't worry. What's the score here? What's next?

RESERVATIONS CLERK
(face MORPHING back to normal; she holds out an ENVELOPE)
Your suite's not ready yet. But there's somebody looking for you.

DUKE
(shouts)
No! Why? We haven't done anything yet!

At this, the RESERVATIONS CLERK MORPHS into the green jowls and fangs of a MORAY EEL. DUKE screams, lunges back at DR. GONZO, who reaches out and takes the ENVELOPE.

DR. GONZO
I'll handle this. This man has a bad heart, but I have plenty of medicine. My name is Dr. Gonzo. Prepare our suite at once. We'll be in the bar.

They stagger across an insanely crowded lobby toward the BAR. No one pays any attention to them.

MINT HOTEL BAR INT DAY

They enter the BAR, decorated with a NAUTICAL THEME.

DUKE
(muttering)
There's so much blood on this floor, we're going to have to order golf shoes just to walk.

They sit at TWO BAR STOOLS at the edge of the lobby. DUKE holds onto the decorative fish netting to keep his balance.

His POV -- the MINT 400 REGISTRATION DESK.

DR. GONZO
(to BARTENDER)
Two cuba libres, beer and mescal on the side.
(opens the ENVELOPE)
From your contact. Lacerda. He wants to meet us.

ANGLE ON DUKE'S HORRIFIED FACE. His POV again -- the bar is now populated by GIANT REPTILES. One of them gnaws on a GIANT BIRD's neck. BLOOD flows freely across the floor.

DUKE
But what about our room? And the golf shoes? We're right in the middle of a fucking reptile zoo! And somebody's giving booze to these goddamn things! It won't be long before they tear us to shreds.

A GROUP OF REPTILES AT THE REGISTRATION DESK stares at them. blood dripping from their fangs.

DUKE
How many have they killed already? Holy shit! Look at that bunch over there! They've spotted us!

DR. GONZO
(downs his drink; gets up)
That's the press table. That's where you have to sign in for our credentials. You handle that, and I'll check on the room.

DUKE
No, no. Don't leave me.

But when he looks, DR. GONZO has disappeared. He looks around at the GHASTLY REPTILE ZOO. Carefully, he detaches a MARLIN SPIKE from the nautical decorations at the bar, and, holding it raised in his fist, walks OUT OF FRAME --

LIGHTNING FLASH

HISSES and SCREAMS as of a ferocious battle with REPTILES.

FADE IN FROM WHITE --

MINT HOTEL SUITE INT DUSK

DUKE, still clutching the MARLIN SPIKE, stares wildly out the window. Myriad colors flash across his face. Behind him, at the door, DR. GONZO signs for a large room service order from a vaguely reptilian WAITER.

DUKE
Look outside.

DR. GONZO
Why?

DR. GONZO escorts the cart the length of the suite, to where DUKE is transfixed by the gigantic neon sign outside the window - millions of colored balls racing around a complicated track, giving off a loud hum...

DUKE
There's a big... machine in the sky... some kind of electric snake... coming straight at us.

On the room service cart lie four club sandwiches, four shrimp cocktails, a quart of rum and nine grapefruit. DR. GONZO pulls one apart with his hands.

DR. GONZO
Shoot it.

DUKE
Not yet. I want to study its habits.

DR. GONZO turns on the TV. The NIGHTLY NEWS. A BUDDHIST MONK, protesting the war, sets himself on fire.

He goes over to the corner, pulls on the chain to close the drapes.

DR. GONZO
Look. You've ot to stop this talk about snakes and leeches and lizards and that stuff. It's making me sick.

DUKE
Don't worry.

DR. GONZO
<u>Worry</u>? Jesus, I almost went crazy down there. They'll never let us back in that bar - not after your scene at the press table.

DUKE
What scene?

DR. GONZO
You bastard! I left you alone for <u>three minutes</u>. You scared the shit
(CONT.)

DR. GONZO (CONT.)
out of those people, waving that goddamn marlin spike around and yelling about reptiles. You're lucky I came back in time. They were ready to call the cops. I said you were only drunk, and I'd take you upstairs for a cold shower. Hell, the only reason they gave us press passes was to get you out of there.
(paws through the kit bag)
That straightened me right out.

The PHONE rings. DUKE cautiously picks it up.

DR. GONZO
I must have some drugs. What have you done with the mescaline?

DUKE grabs the kit bag from GONZO, finds the mescaline. They both pop some pellets.

DUKE
(to PHONE)
Hello?

DR. GONZO
Maybe you should go easy on the mescaline. That acid's still working on you.

VOICE ON PHONE
Thompson? Hunter S. Thompson? Innes here. About that ape.

DUKE
(screams; drops the PHONE)
OH MY GOD! They're on to us! That man KNOWS MY REAL NAME!

DR. GONZO tackles him again, hangs up the phone. He whips the .357 MAGNUM from his waistband and holds it to DUKE'S HEAD.

DR. GONZO
(cooing)
Don't you remember? You gave your real name to some guy you met in the bar. He was telling you about a trained ape. You told him you wanted to buy it, you fool.

A KNOCK ON THE DOOR.

DUKE
(moans)
Oh my God. Who's that?

DR. GONZO sticks his gun in his waistband and goes to the door. DUKE turns his attention to the TELEVISION. The LAOS INVASION. Explosions. Men fleeing in terror. A Pentagon general pointing at a map.

DR. GONZO opens the door to LACERDA, the photographer. Healthy, eager, fit.

LACERDA
(shakes hands)
Duke? I'm Lacerda. Your photographer. Got your press passes? Good, good. Too bad you missed the bikes checking in. My, that was a sight. Husquavarnas, Yamahas, Kawasakis, couple of Triumphs, here and there a CZ...all very fast! What a race it's gonna be. Well. We start at dawn. Get a good night's sleep. I know I will!

And with a cheerful wave, he's gone.
DR GONZO turns back to the business at hand.

DUKE
That's good. They'll probably have a big net ready for us when we show up.

DR. GONZO
As your attorney I advise you not to worry about me. Let's carve up this grapefruit, make a fine rum punch, maybe toss in some more blotter... What's that you're watching?

He and DUKE watch the TELEVISION in silence. BURNING, TWISTED WRECKAGE.

DR GONZO charges like a bull at the TELEVISION.

DR. GONZO
(lunges for the dial)
TURN THAT SHIT OFF!

THE SCREEN GOES BLACK.

THE SOUND OF MOTORCYCLES REVVING THEIR ENGINES.

DESERT EXT DAWN

SUNRISE. A cool, bright DAWN.
The SOUND OF SHOTGUNS BLASTING. And MOTORCYCLES REVVING off screen. CRANE DOWN as the RED SHARK drives up to the MINT GUN CLUB. GUYS taking dawn TARGET PRACTICE.

DUKE V/O
The racers were ready at dawn. Fine sunrise over the desert. Very tense. But the race didn't start until nine, so we had to kill about three long hours in the casino next to the pits. That's where the trouble started.

RACE BAR TENT INT MORNING

Crap tables. Smoke. Drunken shouting. Might as well be the middle of the night on the Strip.

DUKE, his ever-present beer in hand, makes his way through the crowd toward the BAR, where a drunken REPORTER slides off his barstool.

DUKE V/O
The bar opened at seven. There was a "koffee and donuts canteen" in the bunker, but those of us who had been up all night in places like the Circus Circus were in no mood for coffee and donuts. We wanted strong drink.

DUKE slides onto a newly vacated barstool next to the REPORTER.

A HOODLUM in a Vincent Black Shadow t-shirt bellies up to the bar.

HOODLUM
God damn! What day is this--Saturday?

DUKE
More like Sunday.

HOODLUM
Hah! That's a bitch, ain't it? Last night I was home in Long Beach and somebody said they were runnin' the Mint 400 today, so I says to my (CONT.)

HOODLUM
(CONT.)
old lady. "Man, I'm goin'." So she gives me a lot of crap about it, so I start slappin' her around, and the next thing you know two guys I never seen before are beating me stupid. Then they gave me ten bucks, put me on a bus, and when I woke up it was dawn and here I was in downtown Vegas, and for a minute all I could think was, "O Jesus, who's divorcing me this time?" But then I remembered, by God! I was here for the Mint 400. And, man, I tell you, it's wonderful to be here. Just wonderful to be here with you people.

DUKE tries fruitlessly to get the BARTENDER's attention.

REPORTER
(lunges across bar; grabs BARTENDER)
Senzaman wassyneeds!

DUKE
Fast up with it! Why not five?
(smacks the bar with his palm)
Hell yes! Bring us ten!

REPORTER
(screams)
I'll back it!
(slides to his knees)
This is a magic moment in sport! It may never come again! I once did the Triple Crown, but it was nothing like this.

A FROG-EYED WOMAN claws at him, tries to haul him up.

FROG-EYED WOMAN
Stand up! Please stand up! You'd be a very handsome man if you'd just stand up!

REPORTER
Listen, madam. I'm damn near intolerably handsome down here where I am. You'd go crazy if I stood up!

A bright-eyed, camera-hung LACERDA appears.

LACERDA
(to BARTENDER)
Club soda, please.
(to DUKE)
Man, it's great out there! Getting ready for the race. Last minute bolt tightening, taping the headlights, topping off oil in the forks...

DUKE
Lunatics.

LACERDA
What?

DUKE
I said, and here we are, the absolute cream of the sporting press, gathered to cover it.

LACERDA grins. A SHOUT goes up from outside.

LACERDA
That's it! The flag's going down. Meet you outside!

He hurries out through the crowd. DUKE, carrying two drinks, follows.

Much shouting. But the crowd's too thick to get through in time All they can see is a FLAG GOING DOWN and a CLOUD OF DUST

The SOUND OF THE RACE STARTING.

A CHEER goes up, and the CROWD turns, streams back into the tent.

REPORTER 2
Well, that's that. They'll be back in an hour or so. Let's go back to the bar.

RACE BAR TENT EXT DAY

DUKE and GONZO run outside. Nothing. Except for a THICK CLOUD OF DUST. LACERDA enthusiastically photographs the DUST.

LACERDA
(shouts)
I'll just keep trying combos of film and lenses till I find one that works in this dust!

DESERT EXT DAY

The HUGE IMPENETRABLE CLOUD OF DUST.
The SOUND OF MOTORCYCLES RACING.

A moment later, the RED SHARK races out of the dust. LACERDA at the wheel, DUKE next to him, coughing, choking, trying to find the trail. DUKE drinks a beer.

DUKE
Wait! I hear one! Over there!

The RED SHARK bounces over boulders. A BIKE sounds in the opposite direction.

LACERDA
No! There!

They are LOST IN THE CLOUD OF DUST. Coughing, they stop. Listen.

The SOUND OF A MOTOR VEHICLE DRAWING NEAR. SHOTS BEING FIRED. SHOUTING AND HOOTING.

DUKE stands, like a lone gunfighter preparing to meet the enemy.

OUT OF THE DUST - A DUNE BUGGY races toward them, loaded down with THREE RETIRED MILITARY MEN, drunk as hell, heavily armed.

Their RADIO blares "THE BATTLE HYMN OF LIEUTENANT CALLEY."

The DUNE BUGGY is decorated with Screaming Eagles carrying American Flags in their claws. A slant-eyed Snake being chopped to bits by a buzz-saw made of stars and stripes. A machine gun mount on the passenger side.

The DUNE BUGGY races over and stops, MUSIC BLARING. All have to YELL to make themselves heard.

DUNE BUGGY DRIVER
We're looking for the race. Where is the damn thing?

DUKE
Beats me. We're just good patriotic Americans like yourself.

The DUNE BUGGYISTS eye LACERDA, who is clearly <u>not</u> of the white American persuasion.

DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #1
(sings along with radio)
"We responded to their rifle fire with everything we had..."

DUNE BUGGY DRIVER
(suspiciously)
What <u>outfit</u> you fellows with?

DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #2 eyes them, automatic weapon held across his chest.

DUKE
The sporting press. We're friendlies. Hired geeks.

The DRIVER and DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #2 exchange looks.

DUKE
If you want a good chase, you should get after that skunk from CBS News up ahead in the black jeep. He's the man responsible for THE SELLING OF THE PENTAGON.

All in the DUNE BUGGY brighten.

DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #1
HOT DAMN!

DUNE BUGGY PASSENGER #2
A black jeep, you say?

And they ROAR away.

DUNE BUGGY DRIVER
THANKS FOR THE TIP!

LACERDA screeches off in the opposite direction, waking DR. GONZO, who has been asleep in the back seat of the SHARK, and yanking DUKE down in a heap on the seat, spilling his beer

DUKE
You're fired. Take me back to the pits.

CUT TO:

DESERT HIGHWAY EXT DAY

The RED SHARK drives out of the dust cloud, onto the highway back toward Las Vegas, past a GIANT BILLBOARD that says:

DON'T GAMBLE WITH MARIJUANA!
IN NEVADA: POSSESSION--20 YEARS
SALE--LIFE!

DR. GONZO sits with his feetup on the back seat -- dressed in a new blue blazer, captain's hat with gold braid, tan pants and silk scarf.

DR. GONZO
Is that mescaline working for you? It's not working for me.

LAS VEGAS STREETS EXT NIGHT

LACERDA has been left at the hotel. DUKE, beer in hand, drives DR. GONZO, in his nautical outfit, scans The Vegas Visitor They each take another mescaline pellet.

DR. GONZO
How about "Nickel Nick's Slot Arcade"? "Hot Slots," that sounds heavy. Twenty-nine cent hotdogs....

DUKE
We should go see the Debbie Reynolds show at the Desert Inn. I don't know about you, but in my line of business, it's important to be Hep.

DR. GONZO
Mine too. But as your attorney I advise you to drive over to the Tropicana and pick up on Guy Lombardo. He's in the Blue Room with his Royal Canadians.

DUKE
Why?

DR. GONZO
Why what?

DUKE
Why should I pay out my hard-earned dollars to watch a fucking corpse?

DR. GONZO
Look. Why are we out here? To entertain ourselves, or to do the job?

DUKE
The job, of course.

DESERT INN EXT NIGHT

He turns suddenly, and, after a series of bumps, the RED SHARK comes to a halt.

A DOORMAN appears, waving his hands and screaming.

DOORMAN
What the hell are you doing? You can't park here!

DUKE
Why not?

PULL BACK to reveal the RED SHARK parked on the sidewalk in front of the DESERT INN. The MARQUEE says: TONIGHT. DEBBIE REYNOLDS.

DR. GONZO leaps from the car, hands the DOORMAN a bill.

DR. GONZO
We want this car parked! I'm an old friend of Debbie's. I used to romp with her.

The DOORMAN pockets the bill, hands them a parking stub. Our HEROES hurry toward the hotel.

DUKE
That was quick thinking.

DR. GONZO
What do you expect? I'm your attorney. And you owe me five bucks. I want it now.

DUKE hands it over.

DESERT INN HOTEL LOBBY INT NIGHT

The REPORTER from the Mint 400 chants his story into a lobby phone. surrounded by PLASTIC PALM TREES.

REPORTER
LAS VEGAS AT DAWN--the racers are still asleep. the dust is still on the desert. $50.000 in prize money slumbers darkly in the office safe at the fabulous Mint Hotel. And the cream of the sporting press is here. as always. with a sturdy police escort... yes. operator. that word was police...

DUKE and GONZO enter. pass him by. hurrying toward the GRAND BALLROOM--which is guarded by a MAN IN A WINE-COLORED TUXEDO.

DUKE V/O
This was Bob Hope's turf. Frank Sinatra's. Spiro Agnew's. The lobby reeked of high-grade formica. Clearly a high-class refuge for Big Spenders.

DUKE. the mescaline kicking in again. stares at a huge photograph of DEBBIE REYNOLDS and the BEE GEES. His eyes come to rest of DR. GONZO. arguing with the MAN IN THE WINE-COLORED TUXEDO.

DR. GONZO
What do you mean it's full? Fuck seats. We're old friends of Debbie's. We drove all the way from L.A. for this show. and we're goddamn . well going in.

Argument. More BILLS exchange hands.

DUKE V/O
Finally. after a lot of bad noise. he let us in. Provided we would stand quietly in back and not smoke.

GRAND BALLROOM STANDING ROOM INT NIGHT

Our HEROES stand. transfixed. at a STAGE that we never see. DUKE's hand automatically reaches inside his pocket for a HASH PIPE.

DUKE V/O
We promised, of course, but the tension had been too great.

The SOUNDS OF A HIGHLY BLANDIZED ROCK SONG waft from the stage.

DUKE
Did the mescaline just kick in? Or is that Debbie Reynolds in a silver Afro wig?

DR. GONZO
(yells)
JESUS CREEPING SHIT. WE'VE WANDERED INTO A TIME CAPSULE.

HEAVY HANDS grab them from behind as DUKE jams the PIPE back into his pocket.

DESERT INN EXT NIGHT

Our HEROES are thrown through the front door, as the RED SHARK is driven up.

WINE-COLORED TUXEDO
If Debbie has friends like you guys, she's in worse trouble than I thought.

The RED SHARK drives away, DUKE at the wheel. GONZO stands on the passenger side, yelling.

DR. GONZO
We'll see about this! You paranoid scum!

DUKE
We'll go to the Circus Circus Casino. They'll never fuck with us there.

The TAILLIGHTS disappear down the street.

DR. GONZO'S VOICE
I'm telling you, this mescaline isn't working. Where's the ether?

CIRCUS CIRCUS PARKING LOT EXT NIGHT

RED SHARK parked. DUKE smokes the hash pipe in front.

DR. GONZO appears from the trunk bearing ether. He pours it on two kleenex, which both men hold up to their noses.

They get out of the car, laughing hysterically, falling over each other, reeling like drunks in an early Irish novel.

DUKE V/O
This is the main advantage of ether. Total loss of all basic motor skills--severance of all connection between body and brain. Which is interesting, because the brain continues to function more or less normally. You can actually watch yourself behaving in this terrible way, but you can't control it.

CIRCUS CIRCUS CASINO INT NIGHT

At the TURNSTYLES, DUKE and GONZO bounce off the walls, crash into OLD LADIES, giggle helplessly as they try to pay.

DUKE V/O
Ah, devil ether. A total body drug. The mind recoils in horror, unable to communicate with the spinal column. Hands flap crazily, unable to get money out of pocket...garbled laughter and hissing from the mouth...always smiling...

The ATTENDANTS help the MEN with their money and tenderly escort them through the turnstyles.

DUKE V/O
Ether is the perfect drug for Las Vegas. In this town they love a drunk. Fresh meat. So they put us through the turnstiles and turned us loose inside.

CIRCUS CIRCUS REVOLVING MERRY-GO-ROUND BAR INT NIGHT

DUKE and GONZO sit, glassy-eyed, on the revolving platform, gazing ahead of them. GONZO shakes uncontrollably. The other PATRONS stare.

DUKE V/O
Four stories above our heads, a half-naked fourteen year old girl was being chased through the air (CONT.)

DUKE V/O
(CONT.)
by a snarling Wolverine and six nymphet sisters from San Diego. Suddenly the Wolverine was locked in a death battle with two silver-pained Polacks -- seizing the animal they fall towards the crap tables -- shoot the pasties off the nipples of a ten-foot bull-dyke -- win a cotton-candy goat.

A loudly-dressed MIDWAY HUSTLER steps up to them. He carries a large CAMERA attatched to a long TUBE.

HUSTLER
Stand in front of this fantastic machine, my friends, and for just 99¢ your likeness will appear, two hundred feet tall, on a screen above downtown Las Vegas!
(he sticks the CAMERA in DR. GONZO's face)
Say whatever you want, fella. They'll hear you, don't worry about that. Remember, you'll be two hundred feet tall!

DUKE
This is what the whole hep world would be doing on Saturday night if the Nazis had won the war.

DR GONZO pisses his pants. The HUSTLER, disgusted, turns away

DR. GONZO
This place is getting to me. I'm getting the Fear.

DUKE
Nonsense. We came here to find the American Dream, and now we're in the vortex. You must <u>realize</u> that we've found the main nerve.

DR. GONZO
That's what gives me the Fear.

DUKE
Look over there. Two women fucking a Polar Bear.

DR. GONZO
(shouts)
Don't fuck around! One more hour in this town and I'll kill somebody!

He leaps up, shivering and sweating, runs to the edge of the turntable.

DR. GONZO
When does this thing stop?

DUKE carefully gets up, walks past him off the turntable.

DUKE
It's not ever going to stop.

He reaches out to grab GONZO, who, recoiling in fear, is carried around one more time.

DUKE V/O
We were both out of our heads. If we wanted to avoid jail, the thing to do was leave quietly.

DUKE leaps onto the merry-go-round and shoves GONZO from behind GONZO goes down with a hellish scream.

DUKE leaps off the turntable, hurries away. GONZO scrambles after him

DR. GONZO
Somebody pushed me!

DUKE
The bartender. He didn't like you flirting with the Polar Bear.

DR. GONZO
Jesus! Let's get out of here! Where's the elevator?

DUKE
Don't go near that elevator. That's just what they want...trap us in a steel box and take us down to the basement. And don't run. They'd like an excuse to shoot us.

They disappear into DARKNESS.

DUKE V/O
No. This is not a good town for psychedelic drugs. Reality itself is too twisted.

MINT HOTEL INT NIGHT

An ELEVATOR DOOR opens to reveal a BRIGHT LIGHT--and the SMILING FACES of LACERDA. the BLONDE TV REPORTER and HER CREW.

MINT HOTEL ELEVATOR INT NIGHT

DUKE and DR. GONZO stagger into the bright light of their hotel elevator. Both are a mess.

A shaking GONZO hovers moonily around a BLONDE TV REPORTER.

LACERDA
(to DUKE)
Ran into a guy named Innes. He's looking for you. Something about an ape.

BLONDE TV REPORTER
(babbles nervously to DR. GONZO)
Exciting race. wasn't it? Did you see the finish?

DR. GONZO
I was in the finish.

BLONDE TV REPORTER
What? What class were you in? I mean. what did you ride?

DR. GONZO
I RIDE THE BIG ONES. THE REALLY BIG FUCKERS!

DUKE laughs. tries to defuse the situation.

DUKE
The Vincent Black Shadow. We're with the factory team.

CREW MEMBER
(mutters)
Bullshit.

DR. GONZO turns slowly and ominously.

DR. GONZO
Pardon me, lady, but I think there's some kind of ignorant chicken-sucker in this car who needs his face cut open.

From his pocket, he pulls out a GLEAMING HUNTING KNIFE. The ELEVATOR DOOR opens and closes. Nobody moves.

DR. GONZO
You cheap honky faggots! Which one of you wants to get cut?

DUKE, sweating, watches the ELEVATOR NUMBERS. Their floor.

MINT HOTEL HALLWAY INT NIGHT

GONZO emerges from the elevator, nonchalantly sheathing his knife. DUKE looks back into the silent elevator as the doors close. We do not see inside.

MINT HOTEL SUITE INT NIGHT

DR. GONZO
(laughs manically)
Spooked! Did you see that? They were like rats in a death cage!

DUKE
Where'd you get that knife?

DR. GONZO
Room service sent it up. Along with the other stuff. I wanted something to cut the limes.

DUKE surveys the room. AN INCREDIBLE ARRAY OF EXPENSIVE GOODS sent by room service. Liquor. Baccarat crystal. A full set of calfskin luggage. Six hundred bars of Neutrogena soap. Everything but limes.

DUKE
What limes?

DR. GONZO
They didn't have any. They don't grow in the desert.

He opens a new bottle of tequila with his teeth and chugs it. DUKE watches him warily. GONZO slices a grapefruit into quarters, then eighths, then sixteenths, then starts slashing aimlessly at the residue.

DUKE V/O
One of the things you learn, after years of dealing with drug people, is that you can turn your back on a person, but never turn your back on a drug. Especially when it's waving a razor-sharp hunting knife in your eyes.

DUKE
Look. I've got to get some rest. Why don't you take a shower or something.

DR. GONZO eyes him malevolently. Turns with the tequila bottle, tucks another one under his arm, and lumbers toward the bath.

DR. GONZO
That girl in the elevator understood. It's serious. She's in love with me now.

DUKE sags with relief. Too soon. DR. GONZO stiffens as another paranoid thought races through his addled brain. Stiffens and ominously turns.

DR. GONZO
You made a deal with him.

DUKE
What? Who?

DR. GONZO
That Portuguese son of a bitch, Lacerda! I knew it! He's stolen my woman! They're upstairs together now! And <u>you</u> put him onto her!

He lunges at DUKE, who whips a CAN OF MACE from the kit bag.

DUKE
MACE! YOU WANT <u>THIS</u>?

He waves the CAN wildly. GONZO stops. Hisses.

DR. GONZO
You bastard! You'd do that. wouldn't you?

DUKE
(laughs)
Why worry? You'll like it. Nothing in the world like a mace high. Forty-five minutes on your knees with the dry heaves...

DR. GONZO
You cheap honky sonofabitch...

DUKE
There's no choice. I can't go to sleep with you wandering around with a head full of acid and wanting to slice me up with that goddamn knife!

DR. GONZO
(mumbles)
Who said anything about slicing you up? I just wanted to carve a little Z on your forehead. In memory of Lieutenant Calley. Nothing serious.

DUKE
(menaces him with the MACE)
Get in that bathroom. Eat some reds. try to calm down. smoke some grass. -- shit. do whatever you have to do. but let me get some rest.

GONZO turns toward the bathroom. muttering earnestly.

DR. GONZO
Hell. yes. You really need to sleep. You have to work. God damn. What a bummer.
(waves his hand)
Try to rest. Don't let me keep you up.

GONZO shuffles into the bathroom. DUKE jams a chair up against the doorknob. locking him in. Looks at the alarm clock. It says 6:00 a.m. He sets the alarm. Puts the MACE CAN next to the clock. Turns on the TV. NEWS. He rolls a joint.

TV NEWSCASTER (ON TV)
Volunteer witnesses told an informal congressional panel yesterday that while serving as military interrogators they routinely used electrical telephone hookups and helicopter drops to torture and kill Vietnamese prisoners...

Inhaling the dope. DUKE changes the channel. An old MISSION IMPOSSIBLE rerun. Changes it again. A HUMPHREY BOGART MOVIE. Changes it again. SPORTS NEWS. He settles back in his chair.

SPORTSCASTER (ON TV)
In other sports news, boxing legend Muhammad Ali's draft evasion case goes before the Supreme Court tomorrow. It is the fighter's final appeal. Sentenced to five years...

Changes the channel again. The other NEWS SHOW has a clip of MUHAMMAD ALI.

MUHAMMAD ALI (ON TV)
I ain't got nothin' against them Viet Congs.

Changes the channel again. The BOGART MOVIE again. DUKE watches for a moment as BOGART overpowers a cheap GUNSEL. Then he finishes his joint, and finds a DEAD CHANNEL. WHITE NOISE fills the room.

DUKE leans back in his chair, puts on his sunglasses, and falls asleep.

SAME - HALF HOUR LATER

The SOUND OF JEFFERSON AIRPLANE'S "WHITE RABBIT" seeps out from under the bathroom door.

DAWN seeps in under the window shades.

DUKE V/O
The decision to flee came suddenly.

The MUSIC goes off abruptly. Tape being rewound.

DUKE V/O
Or maybe not. Maybe I'd planned it all along. Subconsciously waited for the right moment.

MORE MUSIC BLASTS OUT OF THE BATHROOM AT TWICE FULL VOLUME. DUKE jumps awake, knocking the MACE CAN and the ALARM CLOCK to the floor. The ALARM goes off. The MACE discharges on the carpet. Coughing, horribly groggy, DUKE stomps at the CAN with his foot. Grabs a PAPER from the room service cart to wipe his eyes. Looks at it. The BILL.

DUKE V/O
The bill was a factor. I think. Room service. Here I was in Las Vegas, with this goddamn incredibly expensive car, completely twisted on drugs, no cash, no story for the magazine--and on top of everything else, I had a gigantic goddamn hotel bill to deal with. Sure, I never signed anything with my real name. But could I count on that?

The MUSIC stops. And STARTS UP AGAIN, LOUDER.

DUKE
Will you shut that fucking thing off!

He kicks the chair away from the bathroom door and charges in

THE BATHROOM INT DAY

A GREEN FOG STEAMBATH.
DR GONZO wallows in a slickly surfaced steaming tub. The TAPE PLAYER wails, from where it's plugged in over the sink. DUKE yanks out the cord. And then notices a HUGE HUNK OF CHEWED UP WHITE BLOTTER in the sink.

DUKE
You ate this? ALL THIS ACID?

No answer. GONZO flails in the tub as if the music still plays. SFX -- his head breaks into molecules which revolve around the room.

DUKE
You evil son of a bitch. You better hope there's some thorazine around here, because if there's not, you're in bad trouble.

DR. GONZO
Music. Turn it up. Put that tape on.

DUKE
What tape?

DR. GONZO
Jefferson Airplane. "White Rabbit." I want a rising sound.

DUKE
You're doomed. I'm leaving here in fifteen minutes, and then they're going to come up here and beat the mortal shit out of you with big saps. Right there in that tub.

DR. GONZO
I dig my own graves. Green water and the White Rabbit. Put it on. Don't make me use this.

His arm flashes out of the water, holding the KNIFE.

DUKE
Jesus.

He plugs in the tape/radio player, and switches on the tape. "WHITE RABBIT" begins to build.

DR. GONZO
Let it roll! Just as high as the fucker can go! And when it comes to that fantastic note where the rabbit bites its own head off, I want you to THROW THAT FUCKING RADIO INTO THE TUB WITH ME!

DUKE switches off the machine. They are frozen in a STANDOFF.

DUKE V/O
This is it. I thought. I've gone as far as I can with this waterhead. This time it's a suicide trip. This time he wants it. He's ready...

DUKE
Oh no. Not this radio. It would blast you right through the wall--stone dead in ten seconds. Shit, they'd make me explain it. Drag me down to some rotten coroner's inquest and grill me about the exact details--

DR. GONZO
BULLSHIT! Just tell them I wanted to get HIGHER!

DUKE considers this.

DUKE
Okay. You're right. This is probably the only solution.
(holds the PLUGGED IN TAPE/RADIO over the tub)
Let me make sure I have it all lined up. You want me to throw this thing into the tub when "WHITE RABBIT" peaks. Is that it?

DR. GONZO sinks gratefully back into the water.

DR. GONZO
Fuck yes. I was beginning to think I was going to have to go out and get one of the goddamn maids to do it.

DUKE
Don't worry. Are you ready?

He switches "WHITE RABBIT" back on. GONZO howls and moans and thrashes to the music, straining to get over the top.

Meanwhile, DUKE sorts through a PILE OF GRAPEFRUIT on the sink. Picking out a good two-pounder, he gets a grip on it--and when "WHITE RABBIT" peaks, he lashes it into the tub like a cannonball.

GONZO screams crazily, thrashing and churning in the tub.

DUKE grabs the TAPE/RADIO DECK, jams out of the bathroom--

MINT HOTEL SUITE INT DAY

-- and out of the soundproof suite, grabbing his bag and his mace as he goes.

BATHROOM INT DAY

GONZO floats in the tub, a beatific last smile on his face.

MINT HOTEL ELEVATOR INT DAY

A foot-tapping, beer-drinking DUKE watches the floor numbers as the elevator descends. Checks his pockets. Pulls out THREE FIVE DOLLAR BILLS.

MINT HOTEL LOBBY INT DAY

DUKE hurries out of the elevator, gives a BILL to the MINION waiting there, who instantly barks an order into the house phone.

Motoring, DUKE moves to the HOTEL FRONT DOORWAY, where he gives another BILL to the DOORMAN, who blows a frantic whistle and waves at the CAR BOY.

DUKE V/O
Now it was only a matter of slipping the noose. Yes, extremely casual behavior, wild eyes hidden behind these Saigon-mirror sunglasses, waiting for the Shark to roll up....

MINT HOTEL EXT DAY

The CAR BOY pulls up with a SCREECH. DUKE throws him the last BILL and jumps in. Deliverance!

BELLBOY'S VOICE
MR. DUKE!

DUKE freezes. Then turns on the ignition.

BELLBOY'S VOICE
Mr. Duke! We've been looking for you!

DUKE shifts into drive. The BELLBOY appears, breathlessly hurling himself at the side of the car. DUKE leans his head on the steering wheel in resignation. Then turns a sickly smile on the BELLBOY. Turns off the ignition.

DUKE
Well...why not? I'm too tired to resist. Many fine books have been written in prison.

BELLBOY
Sir?

He thrusts out a TELEGRAM.

BELLBOY
This telegram came for you. Actually, it isn't for you. It's for somebody named Thompson, but it says 'care of Raoul Duke'. Does that make sense? I figured this man Thompson might be part of your team.

DUKE
He is. Absolutely. The thing to do is give this telegram to Dr. Gonzo. The Doctor handles all our finances, makes all our arrangements.

He turns the ignition again. The BELLBOY hangs onto the side of the car tenaciously.

BELLBOY
Tell me. When will the doctor be awake?

DUKE
(tenses)
Awake? What do you mean?

BELLBOY
(uncomfortably)
Well...the manager, Mr. Heem, would like to meet him. Nothing unusual. Mr. Heem likes to meet all our large accounts... put them on a personal basis...just a chat and a handshake, you understand.

DUKE
Of course. But if I were you, I'd leave the Doctor alone until after he's eaten breakfast. He's a very crude man.

BELLBOY
But he will be available? Perhaps later this morning?

DUKE
Look. I have to get going. I have to get out to the track.

BELLBOY
There's no hurry! The race is over!

DUKE
(taking off)
Not for me.

He WAVES, friendly-style, at the BELLBOY, and speeds around a turn, wheels screeching.

DUKE V/O
The weasels were closing in. I could smell the ugly brutes. Yes, it was definitely time to leave. My margin had shrunk to nothing.

AIRPORT EXT DAY

An AIRPLANE lifts off with a screech.

ON THE AIRPLANE INT DAY

DUKE, sunglasses on, beer in hand, looks out the window at the RED SHARK parked crazily in the lot below. It recedes to nothing.

DUKE V/O
It would have taken extreme physical force to keep me off that plane. I was so far beyond simple fatigue that I was beginning to feel nicely adjusted to the idea of permanent hysteria. I felt the slightest misunderstanding with the stewardess would cause me to either cry or go mad. And the woman seemed to sense this, because she treated me very gently.

The STEWARDESS gently places a BLOODY MARY in front of him.

DUKE
May I...have more ice, please?

STEWARDESS
Certainly, sir. And would you like a newspaper?

DUKE
Thank you.

He scans the front page. WAR NEWS. "FIVE WOUNDED NEAR NYC TENEMENT." "PHARMACY OWNER ARRESTED IN PROBE."

DUKE V/O
(swallows PILLS down with the Bloody Mary) -
Reading the front page made me feel a lot better. Against that heinous background, my crimes were pale and meaningless.

He puts down the PAPER, looks out the window at the DESERT below.

DUKE V/O
I thought about my attorney. That nightmare in the bathroom. Just another ugly refugee from the Love Generation. That was the fatal flaw in Timothy Leary's trip. He crashed around America selling "consciousness expansion" without ever giving a thought to the grim meat-hook realities that were lying in wait for all the people who took him too seriously.

DUKE holds out his EMPTY GLASS to the STEWARDESS.

DUKE
Could I have another Bloody Mary, please? And...you wouldn't have any cigarettes, would you?

She smiles at him, disappears down the aisle, reappearing with her own PURSE. She takes a PACK OF CIGARETTES from this gives it to him.

DUKE V/O
Not that they didn't deserve it. They all Got What Was Coming To Them. All those pathetically eager acid freaks who thought they could buy Peace and Understanding for three dollars a hit.

He holds out another EMPTY GLASS.

DUKE
Maybe you just better bring me five, this time.

STEWARDESS
Five Bloody Marys?

DUKE
Just five vodkas.

He looks out again at the desert. ANGLE ON: the magnificent RED MOUNTAINS seen from the air.

DUKE V/O
But what Leary took with him was the central illusion of the whole lifestyle that he helped to create. That sense of inevitable victory over the forces of Old and Evil. That our energy would simply prevail. There was no point in fighting. We were riding the crest of a high and beautiful wave....
(pause)
So now, less than five years later, you can go up on a steep hill in Las Vegas and look West, and with the right kind of eyes you can almost see the high-water mark--that place where the wave finally broke and rolled back.

DUKE shuts his eyes.

BLACK SCREEN

DUKE V/O
I live in a quiet place. If I hurried, I had just enough time to catch the connection home.

JETWAY INT DAY

DUKE, the last person off the plane, walks down the jetway, increasingly cheerful.

And there, AT THE END OF THE JETWAY --

The UNIFORMED DWARF from the Polo Lounge, aggressively holding out the PHONE ON A TRAY.

DUKE
(moans softly)
Oh, Jesus, no...

He shuts his eyes in despair.

CAPTAIN'S VOICE
Folks... we got a litte snag here. Nothing to be alarmed about --

AIRPLANE INT DAY

The plane lurches alarmingly. Warning lights come on. DUKE wolfs down his vodkas as the STEWARDESSES prepare for an EMERGENCY LANDING --

CAPTAIN'S VOICE
-- We're experiencing a little mechanical difficulty. And we'll be going back the way we came.

STOCK FOOTAGE

The PAN AM JET turns in the air.

DUKE V/O
Well. I thought. This is how the world works. All energy flows according to the whims of the Great Magnet. What a fool I was to defy him. Never cross the Great Magnet. I understood this now.

AIRPLANE INT DAY

DUKE opens his eyes. He is still in his seat. Everyone else has left the plane. Beside him are the STEWARDESS and an AIRLINES CUSTOMER RELATIONS MAN holding a TELEGRAM. They look at him with concern.

CUSTOMER RELATIONS MAN
(to STEWARDESS)
Is he okay?

STEWARDESS
He's just had a little too much to drink.
(shakes DUKE's arm gently)
Mr. Duke? We're back in Las Vegas. And you have a telegram.

DUKE shuts his eyes again. Opens them. They're still there.

DUKE
Read it to me. would you. please? My eyes aren't too good this time of day.

The MAN and STEWARDESS exchange looks. She reads.

STEWARDESS
"RETURN AT ONCE REPEAT AT ONCE WE HAVE A NEW ASSIGNMENT ALSO VEGAS STOP THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF DISTRICT ATTORNEYS INVITES YOU TO THEIR FOUR DAY SEMINAR ON NARCOTICS AND DANGEROUS DRUGS STOP MAGAZINE WANTS 50 THOUSAND WORDS MASSIVE PAYMENT TOTAL EXPENSES INCLUDING ALL SAMPLES STOP EVERYTHING IS ARRANGED."
(pause)
It's signed "Doctor Gonzo."

DUKE
(mutters)
Holy shit.

AIRPLANE DOOR EXT AFTERNOON

DUKE stands in the doorway. beer in hand. Sweating horribly. he looks down at LAS VEGAS AIRPORT. He begins his descent.

DUKE V/O
I tend to sweat heavily in warm climates. My clothes are soaking wet from dawn to dusk --

DOCTOR'S OFFICE INT DAY

A DOCTOR examines DUKE.

DUKE V/O
This worried me at first. but then I went to a doctor and described my normal daily intake of booze. drugs and poison --

DUKE
Two or three sixpacks of beer. quart of Chivas. handful of reds. couple of joints. oh. I don't know. varying amount of coke. 1/2 pound steak. rare --

DOCTOR
Come back when the sweating stops. That's the danger point.

DUKE V/O
A sign, he said, that my body's dangerously overworked flushing mechanism had broken down completely.

DOCTOR
I have great faith in the natural processes. But in your case...well...I find no precedent. We'll just have to wait and see, then work with what's left.

LAS VEGAS AIRPORT BAR INT AFTERNOON

The COCKTAIL WAITRESS brings two Bloody Marys.

DUKE
Made with V-8 juice, right? I need the nutritional content. That's right. I'm here to cover the Drug Conference. Haven't eaten anything but grapefruit for about twenty hours. There are limits to what the human body can endure.

The COCKTAIL WAITRESS backs away from him. Goes to the bar. She and the BARTENDER murmur, watch him. DUKE flashes them a BOGART SMILE.

DUKE V/O
You better watch yourself, I thought. You don't want to break down and start bleeding from the ears right here in the terminal. Not in this town.

The BARTENDER and COCKTAIL WAITRESS turn away. DUKE scrabbles through his leather carry-on for the DRUG KIT BAG.

DUKE V/O
Luckily, nobody bothered me while I ran a quick inventory. The stash was a hopeless mess, all churned together and half-crushed. Some of the mescaline pellets had disintegrated into a reddish brown powder...
(licks powder from his fingers)
...but I counted about thirty-five or forty still intact. My attorney had eaten all the reds, but there was quite a bit of speed left... one acid blotter, a nice brown lump of opium hash, six loose amyls... Not enough for (CONT.)

DUKE V/O (CONT.)
anything serious, but a careful rationing of the mescaline would probably get us through the four-day Drug Conference.

DUKE gestures to the WAITRESS, who ignores him. He shrugs and leaves.

DUKE V/O
No sign of my attorney. I decided to take my chances on my own.

VIP CAR RENTAL BOOTH EXT AFTERNOON

The AGENT sits in the glass booth reading a MICKEY SPILLANE NOVEL. DUKE cruises up in the RED SHARK, honks the horn. The AGENT jumps, hurries outside.

AGENT
Yessir!

DUKE
This goddamn Chevy has caused me a lot of trouble. I get the feeling that people are putting me down--especially in gas stations, when I have to get out and open the hood manually...

AGENT
(brightly)
Well...of course. What you need is one of our Mercedes 600 Towne-Cruiser Specials, with air-conditioning. You can even carry your own fuel, if you want, we make that available....

DUKE
Do I look like a goddamn Nazi? I'll have a natural American car, or nothing at all!

SAME A FEW MOMENTS LATER

DUKE and AGENT in same spots, only now DUKE sits in a WHITE CADILLAC COUPE DE VILLE -- the WHITE WHALE.

The AGENT fills out the credit slip with DUKE's credit card number, while DUKE, punching the buttons on the dash, makes every inch of the automated car jump.

DUKE V/O
They called up the white Coupe de Ville at once. Ten grand worth of gimmicks and high-priced Special Effects. The dashboard was full of esoteric lights and dials and meters that I would never understand...

He signs the CREDIT SLIP and pulls out, the AGENT beaming.

The AGENT goes into the booth. Routine phone credit check.

THE WHITE WHALE EXT DUSK

As DUKE drives away, the AGENT, freaked at what he's heard on the phone, races after him. Too late.

DUKE V/O
But there was no doubt in my mind that I was in a superior machine...

Behind him, the AGENT waves his arms, races through traffic after, until, exhausted, he must fall back.

DUKE drives on.

FLAMINGO HOTEL EXT NIGHT

A GIANT SIGN: THE FLAMINGO WELCOMES DISTRICT ATTORNEYS DRUG CONFERENCE 1971.

The WHITE WHALE turns into a VIP PARKING SLOT, immediately attended by impressed MINIONS.

DUKE V/O
I drove straight to the hotel. Still no sign of my attorney. I decided to check in on my own--if only to get off the street and avoid a public breakdown.

A mangy, bleary-eyed, on-the-edge DUKE gets out of the car, pops another pill, takes a swig of his beer, and heads for the lobby

FLAMINGO HOTEL LOBBY INT NIGHT

A nightmare. About a HUNDRED COP TYPES on vacation, all dressed almost exactly alike in plaid bermuda shorts, Arnold Palmer golf shirts, and rubberized beach sandals.

DUKE enters, forces himself to remain calm, heads for the check-in line.

DUKE V/O
The place was full of cops. I saw this at a glance. It was a terrifying scene to walk into--a super stakeout of some kind. If I hadn't known about the conference, my mind might have snapped.

He turns to joke with the DISTRICT ATTORNEY behind him. Waves at the lobby.

DUKE
You get the impression somebody's going to be gunned down in a blazing crossfire at any moment?
(DA stares stonily ahead)
Like, maybe, the entire Manson family?

Still no response. DUKE shrugs, turns away.

AHEAD OF HIM -- A POLICE CHIEF argues with the DESK CLERK. The POLICE CHIEF'S WIFE stands to the side, weeping. The POLICE CHIEF'S FRIENDS stand uneasily around.

POLICE CHIEF
What do you mean I'm too late to register? I'm a police chief. From Michigan. Look, fella, I told you.
(waves a POSTCARD)
I have a postcard here that says I have reservations in this hotel. Hell, I'm with the District Attorneys' Conference! I've already paid for my room!

CLERK
(prissily)
I'm sorry, sir. You're on the 'late list'. Your reservations were transferred to the...ah...Moonlight Motel, which is out on Paradise Boulevard and actually a very fine place of lodging and only sixteen blocks from here, with its own pool and...

The POLICE CHIEF'S WIFE gives a WAIL OF GRIEF.

POLICE CHIEF
You dirty little faggot! Call the manager! I'm tired of listening to this dogshit!

CLERK
(solicitously)
I'm so sorry, sir. May I call you a cab?

DUKE catches the CLERK'S EYE. The CLERK WINKS.

DUKE V/O
Of course, I could hear what the Clerk was really saying--

As the POLICE CHIEF screams insults, the CLERK gives his speech as in DUKE'S IMAGINATION.

CLERK
(to POLICE CHIEF)
Listen, you fuzzy little shithead--I've been fucked around, in my time, by a fairly good cross-section of mean--tempered rule-crazy cops and now it's MY turn. It doesn't matter who's right or wrong, man...what matters is that for the first time in my life I can say: "Fuck you, officer, I'm in charge here, and I'm telling you we don't have room for you."

The CLERK'S EYES glitter malevolently.
DUKE steps to the desk, around the raging POLICE CHIEF.

DUKE
Say. I hate to interrupt, but I have a reservation and I wonder if maybe I could just sort of slide through and get out of your way.

He put his CREDIT CARD down. EVERYONE goes silent. The POLICE CHIEF GROUP stares at him in horror. His old Levis. His dirty basketball sneakers. His Acapulco shirt torn apart by road-wind. His three day beard growth. His mirror shades.

The CLERK smiles broadly, hits the bell for the BELLBOY.

CLERK
Raoul Duke. Certainly, sir! And your bags?

DUKE
Out there in that white Cadillac convertible. Can you have someone drive it around to the room?

ALL EYES swivel toward the gleaming WHITE WHALE.

DUKE
Oh, and could I get a quart of Wild Turkey, two fifths of Bacardi, and a night's worth of ice delivered to my room, please?

CLERK
(nods)
Don't worry about a thing, sir. Just enjoy your stay. Oh, and there's a message for you, sir. Somebody named Innes. He'll call later about the ape.

DUKE
Thank you.

The POLICE CHIEF CROWD stare at him in shock as he waits by the ELEVATOR. He stares back at them.

DUKE V/O
My presence was an outrage. I <u>was</u> the Menace. A stone obvious drug abuser. And I intended to push it all the way to the limit.

DUKE gives a loud SNUFFLE, wipes his nose with his fingers, hauls another BEER out and opens it.

DUKE V/O
It was a matter of life-style, of obligation--even duty. If the Pigs were gathered in Vegas for a top-level Drug Conference, I felt the drug culture should be represented.

The POLICE CHIEF, furious, is restrained by his FRIENDS. DUKE gives them a friendly wave with the beer can, disappears into the elevator.

HOTEL FLAMINGO. UPSTAIRS CORRIDOR INT NIGHT

DUKE stumbles from the elevator. laughing. heads for his room.

DUKE V/O
My idea was to get into the room. smoke my last big chunk of Singapore Grey while watching Walter Cronkite. I needed this break. this moment of peace and refuge. before I did the Drug Conference.

DUKE
(sags with relief: fits the key into the lock)
Ah. home at last!

He swings the door open. IT HITS SOMETHING WITH A SICKENING THUD.

DUKE V/O
Somehow I knew I had the right room...

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

DUKE enters. The door has hit a sixteen year old GIRL with the aura of an angry Pit Bull.

With a curse. he throws his satchel on the bed and turns. DR GONZO. huge and naked. stands grinning in front of a ten foot MIRROR.

DUKE
(moving toward him)
Hey. buddy. how are you doing?

DR. GONZO
Just great. old friend. Yourself?

DUKE
Just fine.
(lowers his voice)
You degenerate pig. What is she? Sixteen?

DR. GONZO
This is Lucy. You know--like Lucy in the sky with diamonds.

LUCY eyes DUKE, like a wild beast. A GROWLING NOISE comes from her throat. She makes ready to pounce.

DR. GONZO
Lucy! Be cool, goddamnit! Remember what happened in the lobby! No more of that, okay?

She growls again. DR. GONZO takes her by the arm.

DR. GONZO
Lucy...this is my client, Mr. Duke, the famous journalist. He's paying for this suite, Lucy. He's on our side.

She still growls. DUKE's hand reaches for the MACE.

DR. GONZO
NO! NOT HERE! WE'LL HAVE TO MOVE OUT!

GONZO leads LUCY away, coaxing gently.

DR. GONZO
Mr. Duke is my friend. He loves artists. Let's show him your paintings.

Still holding the MACE, DUKE follows them to a DOZEN CANVASES, lined up with their backs to us.

DR. GONZO
Lucy paints portraits of Barbra Streisand, don't you, Lucy?

LUCY
I drew these from TV.

DUKE
Fantastic.
(grabs GONZO)
Can we talk?

He drags him toward the PATIO.

LUCY
(makes one-fingered Jesus freak sign)
God bless.

SUITE PATIO EXT NIGHT

While they talk, they do DRUGS: a hit of coke from an almost-empty salt shaker, a roach, a couple of amyls.

DUKE
Are you insane? This girl is a walking bomb. Ever heard of the Mann Act? They'll hang you for Rape and Consensual Sodomy!

DR. GONZO
No! I felt sorry for the girl! I wanted to help her! Jesus, she's a religious freak! She's running away from home for something like the fifth time in six months. I gave her some of the acid I had stashed, and--

DUKE
You stupid bastard. Just picture yourself telling a jury that you tried to help this poor girl by giving her LSD and then one of your special stark naked back rubs.

DR. GONZO
You're right. They'd probably burn me at the goddamn stake.
(shakes his head sadly)
Shit, it doesn't pay to try to help somebody these days.

DUKE
Well. It'll probably work out. We can keep her loaded and peddle her ass at the drug convention.

THROUGH THE GLASS - LUCY is intent on another SKETCH OF BARBRA

DUKE
She's perfect for this gig. The cops will go fifty bucks a head to beat her into submission and then gang-fuck her. We can set her up in one of these back-street motels, hang pictures of Jesus all over the room, then turn these pigs loose on her....Hell, she's strong, she'll hold her own.

DR. GONZO
(aghast)
Jesus Christ. I knew you were sick, but I never expected to hear you actually say that kind of stuff.

DUKE
It's straight economics. This girl is a godsend.

DUKE points at the WHITE WHALE in the parking lot.

DUKE
There it is. Not a bad-looking car for a pimp.

DR. GONZO
Okay, okay. You're right. We have to cut her loose. How about this. We give her some money, get her another hotel room on the other side of town. She's so stoned, she won't remember a thing--

DUKE
Maybe we should take it easy tonight.

DR. GONZO
Right. Let's find a good seafood restaurant and eat some red salmon. I feel a powerful lust for red salmon...

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

GONZO and DUKE enter, as LUCY proudly holds up her sketch.

DR. GONZO
(as DUKE gathers up PORTRAITS)
Okay, Lucy, it's time to go meet Barbra...

DUKE V/O
I felt like a Nazi, but it had to be done. Lucy was not right for us-- not in this fragile situation.

As GONZO hustles LUCY out of the room, DUKE uses the PHONE.

DUKE
Hotel Americana? I need a reservation. For my niece. Listen. I need her treated very gently. She's an artist, and might seem a trifle high-strung...

ON THE STREETS. A CAB STAND EXT NIGHT

The WHITE WHALE pulls up, with DUKE at the wheel. GONZO helps LUCY from the car into a CAB.

DUKE V/O
There was absolutely no choice but to cut her adrift and hope her memory was fucked.

GONZO gets back in the car.

DR. GONZO
Take off slowly. Don't attract attention.

WHITE WHALE INT NIGHT

They pull out into traffic. A balmy desert night.

DR. GONZO
I gave the cabbie an extra five bucks to make sure she gets there safe. Also, I told him I'd be there myself in an hour, and if she wasn't, I'd come back out here and rip his lungs out.

DUKE
That's good. You can't be subtle in this town.

DR. GONZO
As your attorney, I advise you to tell me where you put the goddamn mescaline.

DUKE produces the KIT BAG. They swallow pellets down. The STARS come up in the sky. They glide through the streets.

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

RETCHING SOUNDS come from the bathroom. DUKE turns on the TV. 1971 COMMERCIALS fill the screen.

DR. GONZO
(from bathroom)
This goddamn mescaline. Why the fuck can't they make it less pure? Cut it with Rolaids, or something.

DUKE notices the PHONE MESSAGE LIGHT blinking. Opens another beer, picks up the phone.

DUKE
(to PHONE)
My light's blinking. You have a message for me?

HOTEL FLAMINGO FRONT DESK INT NIGHT

CLERK
Yes. Mr. Duke. Three messages. One says, "Welcome to Las Vegas from the National District Attorneys' Association"...and then Mr. Innes called again about the ape...

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

DUKE
(to PHONE)
Good, good...

GONZO emerges from the bathroom, wipes his mouth with a towel

CLERK'S VOICE
(on PHONE)
...and the last one says, "Call Lucy at the Americana, room 1600."

DUKE
WHAT?

CLERK'S VOICE
...Lucy, at the Americana...

DUKE
Holy shit.
(hangs up; GONZO looks at him)
Lucy called. Room 1600.
What I want to know is -- why was the message for me? Why isn't she looking for you?

DR. GONZO
(shrugs)
She really flipped over you. The only way I could get rid of her was by saying you were taking me out to the desert for a showdown--that you wanted me out of the way so you could have her all to yourself. Shit, I had to tell her something. I told her to go to the Americana and wait and see which one of us came back.
(laughs)
I guess she figures you won.

DUKE stares at him, aghast. The PHONE jangles.

DUKE
(to PHONE)
WHAT?

HOTEL FLAMINGO FRONT DESK INT NIGHT

CLERK
(to PHONE)
Mr. Duke? Mr. Duke, I'm sorry we were cut off. I thought I should call again, because I was wondering....

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

DUKE
(hand over the PHONE)
What has that crazy bitch said to him?
(to PHONE: screams)
We're watching the goddamn news! What the fuck are you interrupting me for? WHAT DO YOU WANT? Where's the goddamn ice I ordered? Where's the booze? There's a war on, man! People are being killed!

HOTEL FLAMINGO FRONT DESK INT NIGHT

CLERK
(tentatively: to PHONE)
Killed?

DUKE'S VOICE
(on PHONE)
IN VIETNAM! ON THE GODDAMN TELEVISION!

CLERK
Oh...yes...yes...This terrible war. When will it end?

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

DUKE
(quietly; to PHONE)
Tell me. What do you want?

CLERK'S VOICE
I thought I should tell you... because I know you're with the Police Convention...that the woman who left that message for you sounded very disturbed. Since I know the nature of your work...

DUKE
(downs a quick CHIVAS REGAL)
I know. Look, you want to be very gentle with that woman. She's our case study. Controlled laudanum experiment, we're watching her carefully. I suspect we'll need your cooperation before all this is over --

CLERK'S VOICE
We're always happy to cooperate with the police. As long as there's no trouble --

DUKE
Don't worry. You're protected. And now I have to get back to the news -- Send the ice.

He hangs up. No NEWS on the TV. Only COMMERCIALS.

HOTEL FLAMINGO FRONT DESK INT NIGHT

Bemused, the CLERK hangs up the phone.

HOTEL FLAMINGO SUITE INT NIGHT

DUKE throws things in his leather case. GONZO fervently flips channels on the TV. Still only COMMERCIALS.

DR. GONZO
Good work. They'll treat us like goddamn lepers after that. What are you doing?
(no answer)
Jesus. you're not leaving?

DUKE
You're goddamn right. I'm leaving. Look. I have nothing personal against Lucy. I'm sure she's very sensitive with a secret reserve of karma underneath her Pit Bull act...and not only is she stone crazy. but also perfectly capable of SENDING US BOTH TO PRISON FOR AT LEAST TWENTY YEARS.
(picks up his bag)
There is no other way to cope with it. It is extremely important to get out of town immediately.

DR. GONZO
(shouts)
WAIT! You can't leave me alone in this snake pit! The room is in my name!
(DUKE heads for the door)
OK. goddamnit! I'll call her! I'll get her off our backs. You're right. She's my problem.

DUKE
No. it's gone too far.

DR. GONZO
You'd make a piss-poor lawyer. Relax. Let me handle this.
(dials the PHONE)
Where's that opium?

DUKE
(tossing him the KIT BAG)
Be careful. There's not much left.

DR. GONZO
(to PHONE)
Room 1600. please. (CONT.)

DR. GONZO (CONT.)
As your attorney, I advise you not to worry.
(nods toward bathroom)
Take a hit out of that little brown bottle in my shaving kit.

DUKE goes in the bathroom, takes out the bottle.

DUKE
What is it?

DR. GONZO
Adrenochrome. You won't need much. Just a tiny taste. That stuff makes pure mescaline seem like ginger beer.
(to PHONE)
Hi, Lucy? Yeah, it's me. I got your message...what? Hell, no, I taught the bastard a lesson he'll never forget... what? No, not dead, but he won't be bothering anybody for awhile. Yeah. I left him out there, stomped him, pulled all his teeth out...

DUKE V/O
Jesus.. I thought. What a terrible thing to lay on somebody with a head full of acid.

In the bathroom, DUKE dips a match head into the brown bottle. He holds it up to the light. Studies it. Wonders what it does. No idea. He decides to find out.

DR. GONZO
(to PHONE)
But here's the problem. I have to leave here right away. That bastard cashed a bad check downstairs and gave <u>you</u> as a reference, so they'll be looking for both of you. The last thing you want to do is call this hotel again; they'll trace the call and put you straight behind bars... no, I'm moving to the Tropicana, I'll call you when I know my room number, sure, as soon as I check in...what? Of course. We'll go to Circus Circus, catch the polar bear act...no, listen, I have to go, they've got the phone tapped...O MY GOD! THEY'RE KICKING THE DOOR DOWN!

DR. GONZO throws the PHONE down, shouts.

DR. GONZO
No! Get away! I'm innocent! It was Duke! I swear to God!
(stomps the PHONE; moans)
You'll never catch Lucy! She's gone! I swear, I don't know where she is! DON'T PUT THAT THING ON ME!
(slams the PHONE down)
Well. That's that. She's probably stuffing herself down the incinerator about now. That's the last we should be hearing from Lucy.

DUKE emerges from the bathroom. VEINS stand out on his forehead. He is purplish-red. OVER THE TOP. Too late, he realizes he is NEAR DEATH.

DR. GONZO
Goddamnit! You took too <u>much</u>! You're about to explode! Jesus, look at your <u>face</u>!

DUKE
(croaks)
Can't move. Maybe if I...took a swim...

DR. GONZO
If I put you in the pool right now, you'd sink like a stone. The first rush is the worst. Don't try and fight it, or you'll get brain bubbles. Strokes, aneurisms. You'll just wither up and die.

DUKE falls to the ground, writhing, catatonic, sinking into paralysis.

DR. GONZO'S VOICE
Die...die...die...

BLACK SCREEN

And the sound, and then the HIDEOUS FACE and VOICE OF RICHARD NIXON.

NIXON
Sacrifice...sacrifice...sacrifice...

SAME AN HOUR LATER

DUKE manages to flop his near-paralyzed body over. GONZO watches NIXON on the late night news. He sees DUKE attempt to struggle to his feet.

DR. GONZO
There's only one place we can get fresh salmon. I checked while you were on the floor.

DUKE
(croaks)
Where did you get...this stuff?

DR. GONZO
The adrenochrome? Only one source for that stuff--

DUKE
The adrenaline glands...from a living human body--

DR. GONZO
Monster client of mine. A Satanism freak. No cash. He offered me this instead. Told me it would make me higher than I'd ever been in my life.
(laughs)
I thought he was kidding. They'd nailed the guy for child molesting. He swore he didn't do it. "Why should I fuck with children?" he says. "They're too small."
(shrugs)
What could I say? Even a goddamn werewolf is entitled to legal counsel. I didn't dare turn the creep down. He might have picked up a letter opener and gone after my pineal gland.

DUKE
We should get some of that. Pineal gland. Just eat a big handful.

DR. GONZO
That's a good idea. One whiff of that shit would turn you into something out of a goddamn medical encyclopedia. Man, your head would swell up like a
(CONT.)

DR. GONZO
(CONT.)
watermelon, you'd probably gain about a hundred pounds in two hours...claws, bleeding warts, then you'd notice about six huge hairy tits swelling up on your back...
(pause)
You want to go out to get that salmon, or what?

DUKE
(croaks)
Yeah. Sure.

HE PITCHES HEAD FIRST ONTO THE BED.

BLACK SCREEN

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE
(crackling and booming)
On behalf of the prosecuting attorneys of this country, I welcome you--

HOTEL BALLROOM INT DAY

A BIG CROWD. Both the COP CREAM OF MIDDLE AMERICA, and a GOOD CONTINGENT OF UNDERCOVER NARCS. So cops dressed like assistant football coaches next to cops with beards, mustaches, super-mod dress.

A BANNER behind the PODIUM reads: NATIONAL DA'S CONVENTION. APRIL 25-29, 1971. "If You Don't Know, Come To Learn...If You Know, Come To Teach."

A dozen big, low-fidelity SPEAKERS mounted on STEEL POLES distort and feed back the SPEAKER'S VOICE through the room.

In the rear fringes of the crowd, under a LOUDSPEAKER, sits DUKE--clad in black FBI wingtip shoes, a Pat Boone madras sportcoat, and an OFFICIAL NAME TAG: RAOUL DUKE, PRIVATE INVESTIGATOR, L.A.

Next to him, DR. GONZO wears a double-breasted blue pinstripe suit. His NAMETAG: DR. GONZO, EXPERT, CRIMINAL DRUG ANALYSIS.

Both men wear SUNGLASSES.

DR. GONZO
This is a fucking nightmare. Here I am infiltrating a goddamn Pig conference, but sure as hell there's some dope-dealing bomb freak in this town who's going to recognize me and put the word out that I'm out here partying with a thousand cops.

DUKE
They're actually nice people. Once you get to know them.

DR. GONZO
Know them? Are you kidding? Man, I know these people in my goddamn blood!

The COPS stir restlessly around them.

DUKE
Don't mention that word around here. You'll get them excited.

DR. GONZO
(lowers his voice)
You're right. I saw these bastards — in Easy Rider, but I didn't believe they were real.

Taking FOUR MESCALINE PELLETS from his pocket, he passes two to DUKE under cover of a CONFERENCE PROGRAM. Both men cough, put hands to their mouths, swallow.

DR. GONZO
Cheers.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE
We must come to terms with the Drug Culture, and to help us do that, today we have--

DUKE
We should have done this on acid.

DR. GONZO
Lucky I brought some.

COP IN BACK
SSSSHHHHH!

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE
Dr. E.R. Bloomquist, author of the paperback book, Marijuana, which, as those of us who've read it know, really tells it like it is--

ON THE PODIUM - The SPEAKER introduces DR. BLOOMQUIST, who wears black wingtip shoes and a Pat Boone Madras sportcoat.

LOUDSPEAKER VOICE
Dr. Bloomquist.

POLITE APPLAUSE.

DR. BLOOMQUIST
Now, there are four states of being in the cannabis, or marijuana, society: Cool, Groovy, Hip, and Square. The square is seldom if ever cool. He is not "with it," that is, he doesn't know "what's happening." But if he manages to figure it out, he moves up a notch to "hip."

DUKE
We need that acid now.

DR. GONZO
(passing it to him)
No shit.

Both cough again and swallow the blue barrels down.

DR. BLOOMQUIST
And if he can bring himself to approve of what is happening, he becomes "groovy." After that, with much luck and perseverance, he can rise to the rank of "cool." A "cool guy," as he's then called, will use the slang of the Drug Culture. He will call the reefer butt a "roach," because it resembles a cockroach. He will call sunglasses "tea shades."

DR. GONZO
(whispers)
What the fuck are these people talking about? You'd have to be crazy on acid to think a joint looked like a goddamn cockroach!

DUKE shrugs.

DR. GONZO
I'll be down in the casino. I know a hell of a lot better ways to waste my time than listening to this bullshit.

He stands, knocking the ASHTRAY off his chair arm, and plunges down the aisle to the door.

COP IN BACK
Down in front!

DR. GONZO
Fuck you!

He stumbles from the room. DUKE turns his attention back to DR. BLOOMQUIST.

DUKE V/O
It was clear we'd stumbled into a prehistoric gathering.

DR. BLOOMQUIST
...about these LSD flashbacks, the patient never knows: he thinks it's all over and he gets himself straightened out for six months, and then, darn it, the whole trip comes back on him.

DUKE V/O
This is dangerous gibberish. The kind that used to be posted, in the form of mimeographed bulletins, in Police Department locker rooms...

The LIGHTS go down. A SPOTLIGHT on DR. BLOOMQUIST. A SLIDE SHOW behind him illustrates his now evangelical talk.

DR. BLOOMQUIST
KNOW YOUR DOPE FIEND! YOUR LIFE MAY DEPEND ON IT!

A SLIDE of a DOPE FIEND appears, looking remarkably like DR. GONZO.

DR. BLOOMQUIST
You will not be able to see his eyes because of Tea-Shades, but his knuckles will be white from inner tension and his pants will be crusted with semen
(CONT.)

DR. BLOOMQUIST
(CONT.)
from constantly jacking off when he can't find a rape victim. He will stagger and babble when questioned. He will not respect your badge. The Dope Fiend fears nothing. He will attack, for no reason, with every weapon at his command--including yours. BEWARE. Any officer apprehending a suspected marijuana addict should use all necessary force immediately. One stitch in time (on him) will usually save nine on you. Good luck.

The AUDIENCE jumps to its feet, CHEERING LOUDLY. LIGHTS up.

DUKE looks around him. THE ROOM HAS RETURNED TO NORMAL. The COP next to him sleeps, snoring loudly. DR. BLOOMQUIST continues to drone on onstage.

A MOD COP dressed like Superfly raises his hand. Behind him, the ranting POLICE CHIEF from the lobby necks with his WIFE.

MOD COP
Do you think, Dr., that the strange behavior recently of the anthropologist Margaret Mead can be explained by a private marijuana addiction?

DUKE leaps up and flees toward the door.

DUKE
(muttering apologies)
Pardon me, I feel sick. Beg pardon, yes, feeling sick...

A PATH opens. He makes it to the door fast. As he goes--

DR. BLOOMQUIST
I really don't know. But at her age, if she did smoke grass, she'd have one hell of a trip.

BEHIND DUKE - The AUDIENCE roars with laughter.

FLAMINGO HOTEL BAR INT DAY

A TV on behind the bar with the sound off. The NEWS.

DUKE
(to BARTENDER)
Tall rum with ice.
(points to TV)
Sports on yet?

BARTENDER
(pours the drink)
Any second.

He turns up the volume. DUKE drinks, watches.

TV NEWSCASTER
(on TV)
...was arrested walking nude through the neighborhood where he lived. Police said he had taken an overdose of PCP, an animal tranquilizer manufactured by Parke-Davis. Charles told a jailer that his eyes were bothering him and that he could not read. Police said Charles seemed to be in a deeply depressed state and so impervious to pain that he did not scream when he pulled out his own eyes...

DUKE lunges across the bar and CHANGES THE CHANNEL. A FOOTBALL COACH being interviewed.

FOOTBALL COACH
(on TV)
...this rookie Fire has definite promise. Yesterday, before practice, he destroyed a Greyhound Bus with his bare hands, and last night he killed a subway. He's a natural for color TV...

MAN'S VOICE
I'm a whiskey man, myself. We don't have much problem from drugs down where I come from.

DUKE turns and sees DR. GONZO deep in conversation with TWO GOOD OLD BOYS, whose name tags identify them as DISTRICT ATTORNEYS FROM GEORGIA. The BARTENDER eavesdrops on their conversation.

At that end of the bar, a LOUNGE BAND plays a medley of anti-war songs.

DR. GONZO
(as DUKE joins them)
You will. One of these nights you'll wake up and find a junkie tearing your bedroom apart.

DA #1
Naw! Not down in my parts.

DUKE
(to BARTENDER)
Another rum, please.

DA #2
(looks at DUKE'S NAME TAG)
You're another one of these California boys. Your friend here's been tellin' us about dope fiends.

DUKE
They're everywhere. Nobody's safe. And sure as hell not in the South. They like warm weather.

DR. GONZO
They work in pairs. Sometimes in — gangs. They'll climb right into your bedroom and sit on your chest with big Bowie knives. On your WIFE'S chest. Put the blade right down her throat.

DA #2
Jesus God almighty! What the hell's goin' on in this country?

DR. GONZO
You'd never believe it. In L.A. it's out of control. First it was drugs, now it's witchcraft.

DA #2
Witchcraft? Shit, you can't mean it!

DUKE
Watch the news. Man, you don't know trouble until you have to face down a bunch of these addicts gone crazy for human sacrifice!

DA #1
Naw! That's science fiction stuff!

DR. GONZO
Not where we operate. Hell, in Malibu alone, these goddamn Satan worshippers kill six or eight people every day.

DA #2
O my god! That's horrible!

DR. GONZO
They chop off their heads and drink their blood. Whole families. During the night. Most of them don't even wake up until they feel their heads going--and then, of course, it's too late.

The BARTENDER, agitated, leans toward them.

DUKE
Four more rums. Plenty of ice. Maybe a handful of lime chunks.

BARTENDER
Are you guys with the police convention upstairs?

DA #1
(with a big smile)
We sure are, my friend.

BARTENDER
I thought so. I never heard that kind of talk at this bar before. Jesus Christ! How do you guys stand that kind of work?

DR. GONZO
(grinning)
We like it. It's groovy.

The BARTENDER stares at them, his face frozen with repugnance.

DUKE
What's wrong with you? Hell, somebody has to do it.

DR. GONZO
Hurry up with those drinks. We're thirsty. Only three rums. Make mine a Bloody Mary.

DA #1
Hell. I really hate to hear this. Because everything that happens in California seems to get down our way. sooner or later--

DUKE
Hell. yes. Just the other day we had a case where they grabbed a girl right off the street. out of a McDonald's hamburger stand.

DA #1
(very agitated)
What happened?

DR. GONZO
Do? Jesus Christ man. They chopped her goddamn head off right there in the parking lot. Cut all kinds of holes in her and sucked out the blood.

DA #2
God almighty! And nobody did anything?

DUKE
What could they do? The guy that took the head was about six-seven and maybe three hundred pounds. He was packing two Lugers. and the other had M-16s. They were all veterans.

DR. GONZO
He used to be a major in the Marines. We know where he lives. but we can't get near the house.

DA #2 whacks his fist on the bar.

DA #2
But we can't just lock ourselves in the house and be prisoners! We don't even know who these people are! How do you recognize them?

DR. GONZO
You can't. The only way to do it is to go to the mat with this scum.

DA #1
What do you mean by that?

DR. GONZO
You know what I mean.

DUKE
Cut their goddamn heads off. Every one of them. That's what we're doing in California.

DA #1
WHAT?

DR. GONZO
Sure. It's all on the Q.T., but everybody who matters is with us all the way down the line.

DA #2
God! I had no idea it was so bad out there!

DUKE
We keep it quiet. It's not the kind of thing you'd want to talk about upstairs. Not with the press around.

DA #1
Hell, no. We'd never hear the goddamn end of it.

DUKE
Dobermans don't talk.

DR. GONZO
Those Satanists fight like hell if you try to take their heads without dogs.

DA #2
God almighty!

DA #1
I could never tell my wife about this. She'd never understand. You know what women are.

DR. GONZO splits. DUKE rises, hand over his chest, as if having a HEART TREMOR.

DUKE
Just be thankful your heart is young and strong.

He shakes hands with the stunned DA'S.

DUKE V/O
It didn't make any difference that we had heads full of mescaline and acid. In scenes like this, there's not much risk in acting like a king-hell freak.

ON THE STREETS OF LAS VEGAS EXT NIGHT

The WHITE WHALE cruises. DUKE, behind TEA-SHADES, drives. DR. GONZO hurls abuse at passing cars and vomits out of the window. Passing a bottle of rum back and forth, they go by a NEON CASINO SIGN: GORILLA ACT NIGHTLY.

DUKE V/O
Vegas is so full of natural freaks--people who are genuinely twisted--that drugs aren't much of a problem. Psychedelics are almost irrelevant in a town where you can wander into a casino and witness the crucifixion of a gorilla--on a flaming neon cross that suddenly turns into a pinwheel, spinning the beast around in wild circles above the crowded gambling action.

The WHITE WHALE pulls up beside a BLUE FORD. TWO CONVENTIONEER COUPLES.

DR. GONZO
Hey there! You folks want to buy some heroin?

The COUPLES don't react. Pretend he's not there.

DR. GONZO
Hey, honkies! Cheap heroin! This is the real stuff! You won't get hooked! You folks never talked to a vet before? I just got back with it from Vietnam! Pure scag! Jab it right in your fucking eyeballs.

The MAN IN THE BACK SEAT, enraged, lunges against the glass, trying to get at GONZO.

DR. GONZO
Shoot! Fuck! Scag! Blood!
Rape! Cheap! Communist!

DUKE hits the brakes, shooting GONZO against the dashboard. The FORD surges ahead. DUKE makes a quick turn behind it, almost losing control. He straightens it out, turns and FISHTAILS again.

GONZO
(laughs madly)
Jesus Christ. That guy was trying to bite me.

DUKE
I don't like the way this thing is cornering...

They RACE away.

GAS STATION EXT NIGHT

TWO ATTENDANTS watch in horror as a THIRD ATTENDANT, under DUKE's manic direction, pumps air into the WHITE WHALE'S TIRES.

DUKE
Pump it up to 75! Make it 100!

THIRD ATTENDANT
They'll explode!

DUKE
These are experimental tires! I told you! I'LL TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY!

The ATTENDANT finishes, jumps back as the WHITE WHALE SCREECHES out of the station, taking a corner in a very stylish manner.

WHITE WHALE INT NIGHT
DUKE drives through the night.

DUKE
I could go for some coffee.

DR. GONZO
Right up here. Terry's Taco Stand USA. Five tacos for a buck.

DUKE
I'd rather go somewhere where there's one for 50 cents.

DR. GONZO
No. don't judge a taco by its price.

TACO STAND EXT NIGHT

The WHITE WHALE is parked at the window.

WAITRESS
May I help you?

DR. GONZO
Yeah. These tacos. Are they Mexican?

WAITRESS
We have tacos. I don't know how Mexican they are.

DR. GONZO
I'll take five of them.

WAITRESS
(over her shoulder)
Five tacos. Lou.

DR. GONZO
As your attorney I advise you to get the chiliburger.

DUKE
That's too heavy for me.
And a coffee.

WAITRESS
And a coffee. Anything else?

DR. GONZO
Yeah. Where are you from?

WAITRESS
New York.

DR. GONZO
And you've just been here a day.

WAITRESS
No. I've been here a while.

DR. GONZO
Where do you go around here? Say you wanted to go swimming?

WAITRESS
In my backyard.

DR. GONZO
What's the address?

WAITRESS
Um. go to the... ah... the pool's not open yet. Anything else?

DR. GONZO
Yeah. The American Dream. You know where that is? We were told it was somewhere in this area.

WAITRESS
Hey. Lou. you know where the American Dream is?
(hands over bag)
Five tacos and a coffee.

LOU. the cook. appears.

LOU
The American Dream? You mean. like a discotheque or something?

DR. GONZO
Sort of. We were told. take this white Cadillac and go till you find the American dream. It's somewhere in the Las Vegas area.

LOU
Only place like that near here's the Old Psychiatrist's Club. Right off Paradise and Eastern.

WAITRESS
I think that place burned down.

LOU
They're just remodeling it.

WAITRESS
Oh.

DR. GONZO
Great tacos.

WAITRESS
Paradise and Eastern. You might want to try there. I never heard it called the American Dream, though.

DUKE
We'll find it. Thanks.

CUT TO:

PARADISE & EASTERN EXT DAWN

A burned-out concrete husk, obviously long-abandoned, on the edge of the desert. DUKE and GONZO sit in the WHITE WHALE, eating tacos as the sun rises behind them.

DUKE V/O
Five days in Las Vegas is like five years anywhere else.

FLAMINGO HOTEL SUITE INT DAY

PAN OF THE ROOM. Total destruction. TEN FOOT MIRROR SHATTERED. RED AND BLUE CHRISTMAS LIGHTS in the light fixtures USED TOWELS, stained with mustard, catsup, and other vile substances, hang everywhere. Uneaten french fries COCONUT HUSKS. Dessicated HONEYDEW RINDS.

DF GONZO'S BED, empty, is a rat's nest of burned bedding and exposed stuffing.

The SOUNDS OF VOMITING come from a closet near the front door.

DUKE, wired, sits on his bed, beer in hand, watching the TV. A CAMPUS RIOT SPIRO AGNEW lecturing the press.

DUKE V/O
I was feeling dangerously out of phase with my surroundings. The room looked like the site of some disastrous zoological experiment involving whiskey and gorillas. The general back-alley ambience of the whole suite was so incredibly foul that I figured I could
(CONT.)

DUKE V/O
(CONT.)
probably get away with claiming it was some kind of "Life-slice" exhibit that we'd brought down from Haight Street, to show cops from other parts of the country how deep into filth and degeneracy the drug people will sink if left to their own devices.

MORE SOUNDS OF VOMITING.

DUKE
(calls out)
Are you aware that you are vomiting in the closet, and NOT in the bathroom?

DUKE V/O
(as the VOMITING continues)
Something ugly was about to happen. I was sure of it.
(PHONE rings)
Jesus, what now? I could almost hear the shrill voice of the manager, Mr. Heem, saying the police were on their way up to the room, and would I please not shoot through the door when they began kicking it down.

RRRIIINNNGGG. DUKE fatalistically shakes out his last two speed pills and swallows them.

DUKE V/O
No, they wouldn't call first. Better an ambush. Mace. No warning.

DUKE
(answers PHONE)
Yeah?

BRUCE INNES'S VOICE
(on PHONE)
Thompson? That guy with the ape you wanted's agreed on a price. $750.

DUKE
What kind of greedhead are we dealing with here? Last night it was four hundred.

INNES'S VOICE
He claims he just found out it was housebroken. He let it sleep in the trailer last night, and the thing actually shit in the shower stall.

The ominous SOUND OF A KEY TURNING in the room lock.

DUKE
(to PHONE)
That doesn't mean anything. Apes are attracted to water. Next time it'll shit in the sink.

INNES'S VOICE
Look, we're here in the bar. Maybe you should come down and negotiate...

The SOUND OF SOMEONE ENTERING THE ROOM.

INNES'S VOICE
He's got the ape with him. The thing's drinking a beer.

A PIERCING FEMALE SCREAM RENDS THE AIR.

DUKE
(to PHONE)
Okay. I'll be there in three minutes. Don't let the ape get drunk. I want to meet him under natural conditions.

He hangs up, stands to don his multi-colored bird-shooting jacket. Glances over at GONZO, who pins the HOTEL MAID, an unfortunate woman who looks just like Mickey Rooney, to the burned-out bed, holding the .357 to her temple.

DUKE stands over them, drinking a beer.

DUKE
What is it this time?

DR. GONZO
(grabbing his ID from the bed)
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST!

MAID
No! I'm the maid! I just wanted to clean up!

DR. GONZO
(to DUKE)
She must have used a pass key. I was polishing my shoes in the closet when I noticed her sneaking in--so I took her.

DUKE shakes his head.

DUKE V/O
This time we'd gone too far. A hotel employee. She would have to be dealt with.

DUKE
(barks at the MAID)
What made you do it? Who paid you off?

DR. GONZO
You're part of it, aren't you! The DOPE RING!

MAID
All I wanted to do was clean up your room! I don't know anything about dope! I swear to Jesus I never heard of that stuff!

DR GONZO seems to think, helps her to her feet.

DR. GONZO
Maybe she's telling the truth. Maybe she's not part of it. Maybe she can help.

MAID
Yes! I'll help you all you need, officer! I hate dope!

DUKE
So do we, lady.

DR. GONZO
I think we should put her on the payroll. Have her checked out. See what she comes up with.

DUKE
Good idea. She's inside. She'll know.
(to MAID)
Would a thousand a month be enough?

MAID
A thousand what? Dollars? Oh Lord! I'd do just about anything for that!

DUKE
You and a lot of other people. You'd be surprised who else is on our payroll. Right here in the hotel.

DR. GONZO
(hustling her out the door)
One phone call every day. just tell us what you've seen. Don't worry if it doesn't add up. That's our problem. What's your name?

MAID
Alice. Just ring Linen Service and ask for Alice.

DUKE
You'll be contacted. The password is "One hand washes the other." The minute you hear that. you say. "I fear nothing."

MAID
"I fear nothing."

DR. GONZO
Oh. and don't bother to make up the room. Just leave a pile of towels and soap outside the door exactly at midnight.

MAID
Whatever you say. gentlemen. I can't tell you how sorry I am about what happened...but it was only because I didn't realize.

DR. GONZO
We understand. But it's all over now. Thank God for decent people.

She SMILES as he shuts the door. PAUSE. Then DUKE throws his stuff into his satchel and swings it over his shoulder. heading for the door.

DUKE
Well. that's it. I suggest you get us reservations on the next airplane out of here.

DR. GONZO
Where are you going?

DUKE
To see a man about an ape.

FLAMINGO HOTEL ELEVATOR INT DAY

DUKE, sweating, watches the numbers.

DUKE V/O
We'd abused every rule, by now, that Vegas lived by--abusing the tourists, burning the locals, terrifying the help. The authorities were perfectly capable, under these circumstances, of sending us both to prison for about twenty years.

FLAMINGO HOTEL BAR INT DAY

DUKE enters, failing to notice TWO AMBULANCE ATTENDANTS carrying out an OLD MAN.

DUKE
(to BARTENDER)
Tequila.
(to himself)
I've got to get out of this place.

BRUCE INNES appears at his elbow.

INNES
Thompson? Bruce Innes.

DUKE
Look, where's the ape? I'm ready to write a check. I'm kind of in a hurry.

INNES
(shrugs)
Forget it. They just took him away. He attacked an old man right here in the bar. The creep started hassling the bartender about "allowing barefoot rabble in the place" and just then the ape let out a shriek--so the old guy threw a beer
(CONT.)

INNES
(CONT.)
at him, and the ape went crazy, came out of his seat like a jack-in-the-box and took a big bite out of the old man's head. The cops came and took the ape away. Sorry, man.

He shakes his head. CLOSE IN on DUKE, suddenly grief-stricken.

DUKE V/O
I was stunned. I really wanted that ape. I wanted to take the bastard back home on the plane with me. Two first-class seats - R. Duke and son. I thought about going down to the jail and bailing it out. But then I thought: better stay clear of that jail.

DUKE
Forget the ape. I don't need him.

DUKE drinks, orders one more for the road.

DUKE V/O
No point hanging around this town any longer.

TWO GRIZZLY-LOOKING BOUNCERS appear on either side.

BOUNCER #1
It's time to go.

DUKE
What?

They MARCH him out.

FLAMINGO HOTEL FRONT PORTICO EXT DAY

BOUNCER #2 whistles for the CARBOY to bring the WHITE WHALE.

BOUNCER #1
Where's your friend? The big spic?

DUKE
Look. I'm a Doctor of Journalism. You'd never catch me hanging around this place with a goddamn spic.

BOUNCER #1
(producing PHOTOGRAPHS)
What about these then?

The top one is of DUKE sitting next to GONZO at a table in the Floating Bar. DUKE backs away, gets in the WHITE WHALE.

DUKE
That's not me. That's a guy named DUKE. He works for Rolling Stone. A really vicious, crazy kind of person. And that guy with him is a hit-man for the Mafia in Hollywood...

At that moment DR. GONZO emerges from the hotel, closely followed by SEVERAL UNIFORMED THUGS whom he has hired to carry his luggage set, glassware, soap bars and other acquisitions.

He hands each THUG a five-spot as they load the car, and gets in beside DUKE.

DUKE takes off with a PEAL OF RUBBER on the hugely inflated tires.

DR. GONZO'S VOICE
As your attorney I advise you drive faster. We have fifteen fucking minutes to get on that plane.

DESERT OUTSIDE LAS VEGAS EXT DAY

The WHITE WHALE sails through an intersection as the light turns red.

GONZO paws over a map.

DR. GONZO
What are you doing? You were supposed to turn back there!

He looks wildly around. They are on a deserted freeway, running parallel to the airport runway.

DR. GONZO
Goddamnit! What are we doing out here on this godforsaken road? The airport is over there!

DUKE
Don't worry. I've never missed a plane yet. Except once in Peru. I was already checked out of the country, through customs, but I went back to the bar --

DUKE's story fades out as the WIND NOISE intensifies.

ANGLE ON DUKE'S WATCH, a skeleton-face Accutron.

DUKE V/O
There was only one way to make it on time.

He hits the brakes and runs the WHALE down into the grassy moat freeway divider. Wheels churning, he makes it up the opposite bank, nose of the car straight up, then bounces onto the freeway and keeps going right over a fence, dragging it through a cactus field and onto the --

AIRPORT RUNWAY EXT DAY

DR. GONZO is frozen with fear. DUKE continues his story.

DUKE
-- I woke up about two hours later in a bar in downtown Lima. My luggage was all stacked beside me. Nobody had opened it --

They drive under a parked AIRPLANE. DUKE shouting above the wind, tarmac noise, and jet engine whine.

DUKE
-- so I went back to sleep and caught the first flight out, the next morning.
(checks his ACCUTRON)
Three minutes, fifteen seconds before takeoff. Plenty of time. I'll drop you next to the plane.

DR. GONZO
What about you?

DUKE
Better if we split up. They're looking for two of us, remember?

DR. GONZO
No! I can't get out! They'll crucify me! I'll have to take the blame!

DUKE
Just say you were hitchhiking to the airport and I picked you up.

DR. GONZO
Why not? But for Christ's sake, let's do it fast!

AT THE AIRPLANE

DUKE screeches up in front of the jetliner. GONZO jumps out and whistles to the GROUND CREW. Astonished, they run up and, in a flurry of five dollar bills, grab his luggage, hustle it aboard the plane.

DR. GONZO saunters to the waiting plane. Then he turns back and waves at DUKE.

DUKE
Don't take any guff from these swine! Remember! If you have any trouble you can always send a telegram to the Right People!

DR. GONZO
Yeah... Explaining my Position. Some asshole wrote a poem about that once. It's probably good advice, if you have shit for brains.

DR GONZO climbs the steps, waving, like Jackie Kennedy.

DUKE
Right.

The plane door closes. The WHITE WHALE accelerates away.

LAS VEGAS CITY LIMITS EXT DAY

The WHALE races into the desert.

DESERT HIGHWAY EXT DAY

DUKE, drinking a BEER, drives the wrecked WHALE. A PIECE OF THE FENCE flies out of the back seat as he takes a bump.

DUKE V/O
There was only one road back to L.A. U.S. Interstate 15, just a flat-out high speed burn through Baker and Barstow and Berdoo, then on the Hollywood Freeway straight into frantic oblivion: safety, obscurity, just another freak in the Freak Kingdom.

He passes a HIGHWAY PATROL CAR parked at the side of the road. The PATROL CAR pulls out behind him, LIGHTS FLASHING.

DUKE V/O
Jesus. I thought--what would Horatio Alger do in a situation like this?

He ACCELERATES. The SPEEDOMETER CLIMBS STEADILY.

FARTHER UP THE ROAD EXT DAY

The PATROL CAR screams after the WHITE WHALE.

DUKE V/O
Few people understand the psychology of dealing with a highway traffic cop. Your normal speeder will panic and immediately pull over to the side when he sees the big red light behind him... apologizing, begging for mercy.

DUKE starts checking the side of the road for the RIGHT EXIT. His TURN SIGNAL comes on.

DUKE V/O
This is wrong. It arouses contempt in the cop heart. What you want to do is accelerate. Mash it down and make the bastard chase you at 120 to the next exit. He won't know what to make of your blinker-signal that says you're about to turn right.

AN EXIT OFF-RAMP: AN UPHILL SIDE-LOOP. Speed sign says: MAX SPEED 25.

DUKE heads for this.

DUKE V/O
The trick, at this point, is to suddenly leave the freeway and take him into the chute at no less than a hundred miles an hour.

And so it happens. DUKE is ready for the chute, brakes with some fancy heel-toe work, and comes smoothly to a stop at the top of the ramp, while the PATROL CAR spins and fishtails out of control before bouncing to a stop beside him.

DUKE stands beside the WHITE WHALE, completely relaxed.

The HIGHWAY PATROLMAN, a handsome, clean-cut guy of about thirty, gets out of the car, screaming.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Just what the FUCK did you think you were doing?

DUKE smiles.

DUKE V/O
Let him calm down. The idea is to show him you were always in control of yourself and your vehicle.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
May I see your license...<u>please</u>?

DUKE reaches for it. And BOTH MEN look down at the BEER CAN he has forgotten in his hand.

DUKE V/O
I knew I was fucked.

The COP relaxes. Faintly smiles. Reaches out for DUKE's wallet, then holds out his other hand for the BEER.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Could I have that, please?

DUKE
Why not? It was getting warm anyway.

The HIGHWAY PATROLMAN takes it, pours out the beer. Both MEN look automatically into the BACK SEAT of the WHITE WHALE. A CASE OF BEER.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
(enjoying himself)
You realize it's a crime to--

DUKE V/O
My guilt was so gross and overwhelming that explanations were useless.

DUKE
Yeah. I know. I'm guilty. I understand that. I knew it was a crime, but I did it anyway.
(shrugs)
Shit, why argue? I'm a fucking criminal.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
That's a strange attitude.

He looks at DUKE thoughtfully.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
You know--I get the feeling you could use a nap. There's a rest area up ahead. Why don't you pull over and sleep a few hours?

DUKE V/O
I instantly understood what he was telling me. But for some insane reason, I shook my head.

DUKE
A nap won't help. I've been awake for too long--three or four nights. I can't even remember. If I go to sleep now, I'm dead for twenty hours.

The HIGHWAY PATROLMAN smiles.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Okay. Here's how it is. What goes into my book, as of noon, is that I apprehended you...for driving too fast, and advised you to proceed no further than the next rest area...your stated destination, right? Where you plan to take a long nap. Do I make myself clear?

DUKE
(shrugs)
How far is Baker? I was hoping to stop there for lunch.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Not my jurisdiction. The city limits are two-point-two miles beyond the rest area. Can you make it that far?

DUKE
I'll try. I've been wanting to go to Baker for a long time. I've heard a lot about it.

The PATROLMAN gets in his CAR and starts it up. Leans out the window.

HIGHWAY PATROLMAN
Excellent seafood. With a mind like yours, you'll probably want to try the land-crab. Try the Majestic Diner.

THE ROAD TO BAKER EXT DAY

DUKE drives PAST THE REST STOP.

DUKE V/O
I felt raped. The pig had done me on all fronts and now he was going to chuckle about it--on the west edge of town, waiting for me to make a run for L.A.

THE TURN-OFF FOR BAKER EXT DAY

DUKE turns and drives past the HITCHHIKER from the drive out. The boy sees him and immediately DROPS HIS THUMB.

DUKE ignores him, drives on.

BAKER EXT DAY

The WHITE WHALE pulls up across from the MAJESTIC DINER.

DUKE looks around. The HARDWARE BARN beside him has a huge red sign: BEER.

He goes in there.

HARDWARE BARN INT DAY

Filled with hardware and GOLD LIGHT - an idyllic, Rockwellian scene.

DUKE V/O
Jesus Creeping God! Is there a priest in this tavern? I want to confess! I'm a fucking sinner! Venal, mortal, carnal, major, minor--whatever you want to call it, Lord... I'm guilty.

DUKE enters, sits on a stool next to a WORKBENCH.

DUKE V/O
But do me this one last favor: just give me five more high-speed hours before you bring the hammer down; just let me get off of this horrible desert.

The PROPRIETOR appears, smiling, from where he's been working on an old REMINGTON TYPEWRITER. He steps into a pool of GOLD SUNLIGHT.

DUKE
I know this is a mystic longshot. No way you'd have Ballantine's Ale...

The PROPRIETOR smiles again and produces one from an ice chest, along with an icy cold MASON JAR to drink it from.

PROPRIETOR
If it's not cold enough, I got some chilling out back.
(pause)
Where you coming from?

DUKE
Las Vegas.

PROPRIETOR
Great town, that Vegas. I bet you had good luck there. You're the type.

DUKE
I know. I'm a triple Scorpio.

PROPRIETOR
A fine combination.

DUKE
Don't worry. I'm actually the district attorney from Ignoto county. Just another good American like yourself.

The PROPRIETOR's smile disappears.

Wordlessly, he turns back to his work. His pretty TEENAGE DAUGHTER appears and kisses him hello. They talk together, ignoring DUKE.

Who feels ashamed.

He throws his money on the bench and leaves.

BAKER EXT DAY

DUKE reaches in the back seat of the WHITE WHALE for another warm beer. Spots something on the floor. Dives for it. ONE LAST AMYL CAPSULE.

Grabs it up and CRACKS IT UNDER HIS NOSE.

POUNDS HIS CHEST with the rush and LAUGHS LIKE A MADMAN.

ACROSS THE STREET - TWO YOUNG MARINES come out of the MAJESTIC DINER.

DUKE starts the engine. Leans out and YELLS at the MARINES.

DUKE
GOD'S MERCY ON YOU SWINE!

Cackling, he takes off in the TRASHED, VOMIT-STREAKED WHITE CADILLAC, with a ROAR and a CLOUD OF BLACK OILY SMOKE.

The TWO MARINES look after him, confused.

IN THE WHITE WHALE EXT DAY

Still laughing, DUKE cranks up the TAPE RECORDER, adjusts his TEASHADES.

DUKE V/O
By the time I got back on the road, my heart was full of joy. I felt like a monster reincarnation of Horatio Alger...a Man on the Move, and just sick enough to be totally confident.

DUKE leans back. ACCELERATES OUT OF FRAME.

I-15 EXT DAY

The WHITE WHALE dissolves into the white heat haze.

THE END